

morial of the manna, which was given double on the sixth day for two days. And, (2.) It was intended for an encouragement to all God's people in all ages, to trust him in the way of duty, and to cast their care upon him. There is nothing lost by faith and self-denial in our obedience.

23. ¶ The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine, for ye are strangers and sojourners with me, 24. And in all the land of your possession, ye shall grant a redemption for the land. 25. ¶ If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold. 26. And if the man have none to redeem it, and himself be able to redeem it: 27. Then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overplus unto the man to whom he sold it: that he may return unto his possession. 28. But if he be not able to restore it to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it, until the year of jubilee: and in the jubilee it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession. 29. And if a man sell a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold: within a full year may he redeem it. 30. And if it be not redeemed within the space of a full year: then the house that is in the walled city, shall be established for ever to him that bought it, throughout his generations: it shall not go out in the jubilee. 31. But the houses of the villages which have no wall round about them, shall be counted as the fields of the country: they may be redeemed, and they shall go out in the jubilee. 32. Notwithstanding the cities of the Levites, and the houses of the cities of their possession, may the Levites redeem at any time. 33. And if a man purchase of the Levites, then the house that was sold, and the city of his possession shall go out in the year of jubilee: for the houses of the cities of the Levites are their possession among the children of Israel. 34. But the field of the suburbs of their cities may not be sold, for it is their perpetual possession. 35. ¶ And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him: yea though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. 36. Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God, that thy brother may live with thee. 37. Thou shalt not give him any money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase. 38. I am the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God.

Here is, 1. A law concerning the real estates of the Israelites in the land of Canaan, and the transferring of them.

1. That no land should be sold for ever, from the family to whose lot it fell in the division of the land. And the reason given is, *The land is mine, and ye are strangers and sojourners with me*, ver. 23. (1.) God having a particular propriety in this land, he would by this restraint keep them sensible of it. The possessions of good people, who having given up themselves to God have therewith given up all they have to him, are in a particular manner at his disposal, and his disposal of them must be submitted to. (2.) They being *strangers and sojourners with him* in that land, and having his tabernacle among them, to alienate their part of that land would be in effect to cut themselves off from their fellowship and communion with God, which that was a token and symbol of. For which reason Naboth would rather incur the wrath of a king, than part with the inheritance of his fathers, *1 Kings xxi. 3.*

2. That if a man were constrained through poverty to sell his land, for the subsistence of his family, yet if afterwards he were able he might redeem it before the year of jubilee, ver. 24, 26, 27. and the price must be settled according to the number of years since the sale, and before the jubilee.

3. That if the person himself were not able to redeem it, his next kinsman might, ver. 25. *The redeemer thereof, he that is near unto him shall come and shall redeem*, so it might be read. The kinsman is called *Goel*, the redeemer, *Numb. v. 8. Ruth iii. 9.* to whom belonged the right of redeeming the land: And this typified Christ, who assumed our nature, that he might be our kinsman, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and being the only kinsman we have that is able to do it, to him belonged the right of redemption. As for all our other kinsmen, their shoe must be plucked off, (*Ruth iv. 6, 7*) they cannot redeem; but Christ can, and hath redeemed the inheritance, which we by sin had forfeited and alienated, and made a new settlement of it upon all that by faith become allied to him. We know that this redeemer liveth, *Job xix. 25.* And some make this duty of the kinsman to signify the brotherly love that should be among Christians, inclining them to recover those that are fallen, and to restore them with the spirit of meekness.

4. That if the land were not redeemed before the year of the jubilee, then it should return of course to him that had sold or mortgaged it, ver. 28. *In the jubilee it shall go out.* This was a figure of the free grace of God towards us in Christ, by which, and not by any price of merit of our own, we are restored to the favour of God, and become entitled to paradise, from which our first parents, and we in them, were expelled for disobedience.

5. A difference was made between houses in walled cities, and lands in the country, or houses in country villages. Houses in walled cities were more the fruits of their own industry, than land in the country, which was the immediate gift of God's bounty; and therefore if a man sold a house in a city, he might redeem it any time within a year after the sale, but otherwise it was confirmed to the purchaser for ever, and should not return, no not at the year of jubilee, ver. 29, 30. This provision was made to encourage strangers and proselytes to come and settle among them. Though they could not purchase land in Canaan to them and their heirs, yet they might purchase houses in walled cities, which would be most convenient for them

who were supposed to live by trade. But country houses could be disposed of no otherwise than as lands might.

6. A clause is added in favour of the Levites, by way of exception from these rules. (1.) Dwelling-houses in the cities of the Levites might be redeemed at any time, and if not redeemed should revert in the year of jubilee, ver. 32, 33. because the Levites had no other possessions but cities, and their suburbs, and God would shew that the Levites were his peculiar care; and it was for the interest of the public that they should not be impoverished or wronged out of their inheritances. (2.) The fields adjoining to their cities (*Numb. xxxv. 4, 5*) might not be sold at any time, for they belonged not to particular Levites, but to the city of the Levites, as a corporation, who could not alien without a wrong to their tribe; therefore if any of those fields were sold, the bargain was void, ver. 34. Even the Egyptians took care to preserve the priest's lands, *Gen. xlvii. 22.* And there is no less reason for the taking of the maintenance of the gospel ministry under the special protection of Christian governments.

2. A law for the relief of the poor, and the tender usage of poor debtors; and these are of more general and perpetual obligation than the former.

1. The poor must be relieved, ver. 35. Here is (1.) Our brother's poverty and distresses supposed; *If thy brother be waxen poor*: not only thy brother by nation as a Jew, but thy brother by nature as a man, for it follows, *though he be a stranger or a sojourner.* All men are to be looked upon and treated as brethren, for we have all one father, *Mal. ii. 10.* Though he be poor yet still he is thy brother, and is to be loved and owned as a brother. Poverty doth not destroy the relation. Though a son of Abraham, yet he may wax poor and fall into decay. Note, Poverty and decay are great grievances, and very common; *The poor ye have always with you.* (2.) Our duty enjoined, *Thou shalt relieve him.* By sympathy, pitying the poor; by service, doing for them; and by supply, giving to them according to their necessity, and thine ability.

2. Poor debtors must not be oppressed. *If thy brother be waxen poor, and have occasion to borrow money of thee for the necessary support of his family, Take thou no usury of him, either for money or victuals*, ver. 36, 37. And thus far this law binds still, but could never be thought binding where money is borrowed for purchase of lands, trade, or other improvements, for there it is reasonable that the lender share with the borrower in the profit. The law here is plainly intended for the relief of the poor, to whom it is sometimes as great a charity to lend freely as to give. Observe the arguments here used against extortion. 1. God patronizeth the poor; *Fear thy God*, who will reckon with thee for all injuries done to the poor: thou fearest not them, but fear him. 2. Relieve the poor that they may live with thee, and some way or other they may be serviceable to thee. The rich can as ill spare the hands of the poor, as the poor can the purses of the rich. 3. The same argument is used to enforce this precept that prefaceeth all the ten commandments, ver. 38. *I am the Lord your God which brought you out of Egypt.* Note, It becomes those that have received mercy to shew mercy. If God has been gracious to us, we ought not to be rigorous to our brethren.

39. ¶ And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bond servant: 40. But as an hired servant, and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee and shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee. 41. And then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return. 42. For they are my servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondmen. 43. Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour, but shalt fear thy God. 44. Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. 45. Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession. 46. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession, they shall be your bondmen for ever: but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigour. 47. ¶ And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: 48. After that he is sold, he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him. 49. Either his uncle, or his uncle's son may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family, may redeem him; or if he be able he may redeem himself. 50. And he shall reckon with him that bought him, from the year that he was sold to him, unto the year of jubilee: and the price of his sale shall be according to the number of years, according to the time of an hired servant shall it be with him. 51. If there be yet many years behind, according unto them he shall give again the price of his redemption, out of the money that he was bought for. 52. ¶ And if there remain but few years unto the year of jubilee, then he shall count with him, and according unto his years shall he give him again the price of his redemption. 53. And as a yearly hired servant shall he be with him, and the other shall not rule with rigour over him in thy sight. 54. And if he be not redeemed in these years, then he shall go out in the year of jubilee, both he and his children with him. 55. For unto me the children of Israel are servants, they are my servants, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

We have here the laws concerning servitude, designed to preserve the honour of the Jewish nation as a free people, and rescued by a divine power out of the house of bondage, into the glorious liberty of God's sons, his first-born. Now the law is, 1. That a native Israelite should never be made a bondman for perpetuity. If he were sold for debt, or for a crime, by the house of judgment, he was to serve but six years, and to go out the seventh, that was appointed, *Exod. xxi. 2.* But if he sold himself, through extreme poverty, having nothing at all left him to preserve his life, and it was to one of his own nation that he sold himself; in such a case it is here provided, (1.) That he should not serve as a bond-servant, *ver. 39.* nor be sold with the sale of a bondman, *ver. 42. i. e.* it must not be looked upon that his master that bought him had as absolute a property in him, as in a captive taken in war, that might be used, sold, and bequeathed at pleasure, as much as a man's cattle; no, he shall serve thee as a hired-servant, whom the master has the use of only, but not a despotic power over. And the reason is, *They are my servants*, *ver. 42.* God doth not make his servants slaves, and therefore their brethren must not. God had redeemed them out of Egypt, and therefore they must never be exposed to sale as bondmen. The apostle applies this spiritually, *1 Cor. vii. 23. Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men, i. e.* of the lusts of men, no nor of your own lust; for being become the servants of God, we must not let sin reign in our mortal bodies, *Rom. vi. 12—22.* (2.) That while he did serve he should not be ruled with rigour, as the Israelites were in Egypt, *ver. 43.* Both his work and his usage must be such as was fitting for a son of Abraham. Masters are still required to give to their servants that which is just and equal, *Col. iv. 1.* They may be used, but must not be abused. Those masters that are always hectoring and domineering over their servants, taunting them and trampling upon them, that are unreasonable in exacting work, and giving rebukes, and rule them with a high hand, forget that their master is in heaven; and what will they do when he riseth up? as holy Job reasons with himself, *Job xxxi. 13, 14.* (3.) That at the year of jubilee he should go out free, he and his children, and should return to his own family, *ver. 41.* This typified our redemption from the service of sin and Satan; by the grace of God in Christ, whose truth makes us free, *John viii. 32.* The Jewish writers say, that for ten days before the jubilee trumpet sounded, the servants that were to be discharged by it; did express their great joy by feasting, and wearing garlands on their heads: it is therefore called the joyful sound, *Psal. lxxxix. 14.* And we are thus to rejoice in the liberty we have by Christ.

2. That they might purchase bond-men of the heathen nations that were round about them, or of those strangers that sojourned among them (except of those seven nations that were to be destroyed) and might claim a dominion over them, and entail them upon their families, as an inheritance, for the year of jubilee should give no discharge to them, *ver. 44, 45, 46.* Thus in our English plantations the negroes only are used as slaves, how much to the credit of Christianity I shall not say. Now, 1. This authority they had over the bond-men they purchased from the neighbouring nations, was in pursuance of the blessing of Jacob, *Gen. xxvii. 29. Let the people serve thee*, 2. It is figured the bringing in of the Gentiles to the service of Christ and his Church. *Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance*, *Psal. ii. 9.* And it is promised, *Isa. lxi. 5. Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your vinedressers; see Rev. ii. 26, 27. The upright shall have the dominion in the morning*, *Psal. xlix. 14.* 3. It intimates that none should have the benefit of the gospel-jubilee, but those only that are Israelites indeed, and the children of Abraham by faith: as for those that continue heathenish, they continue bond-men. See this turned upon the unbelieving Jews themselves, *Gal. iv. 25.* where Jerusalem, when she had rejected Christ, is said to be in bondage with her children, *Gal. iv. 25.* Let me only add here, that though they are not forbidden to rule their bond-men with rigour, yet the Jewish doctors say, *It is the property of mercy, and way of wisdom, that a man should be compassionate, and not make his yoke heavy upon any servant that he hath.*

3. That if an Israelite sold himself for a servant to a wealthy proselyte that sojourneth among them, care should be taken that he should have the same advantages as if he had sold himself to an Israelite, and in some respects greater. 1. That he should have the same advantages, *viz.* not to serve as a bond-man, but as a hired servant, and not to be ruled with rigour (*ver. 53.*) in thy sight; which intimated that the Jewish magistrates should particularly have an eye to him, and if he were abused should take cognizance of it, and redress his grievances, though the injured servant did not himself complain. Also he was to go free at the year of jubilee, *ver. 54.* Though the sons of strangers might serve them for ever, yet the sons of Israel might not serve strangers for ever; yet the servant here having made himself a slave by his own act and deed, should not go out in the seventh year of release, but in the jubilee, only. 2. That he should have this further advantage, that he might be redeemed again before the year of jubilee, *ver. 48, 49.* He that had sold himself to an Israelite might, if ever he were able, redeem himself, but his relations had no right to redeem him: but if a man sold himself to a stranger, the Jews say, his relations were urged to redeem him; if they did not, it was fit he should be redeemed at the public charge, which we find done, *Neh. v. 8.* The price of his ransom was to be computed according to the prospect of the year of jubilee, *ver. 50, 51, 52.* as in the redemption of land, *ver. 15, 16.* The learned Bishop Patrick quotes one of the Jewish rabbins for an evangelical exposition of that appointment, *ver. 48. One of his brethren shall redeem him; this redeemer, saith the Rabbi, is the Messiah the Son of David.* They expected the Messiah to be their Redeemer out of their captivity, and restore them to their own land again; but we welcome him as the Redeemer, who shall come to Zion, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob, for he shall save his people from their sins; and under this notion there were those that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

C H A P. XXVI.

This chapter is a solemn conclusion of the main body of the Levitical law: The precepts that follow in this and the following book, either relate to some particular matters, or are repetitions and explications of the foregoing institutions. Now this chapter contains a general enforcement of all those laws by promises of reward, in case of obedience on the one hand, and threatenings of punishment for disobedience on the other hand; the former to work upon hope, the latter on fear, those two handles of the soul, by which it is taken hold of and managed. Here is, 1. A repetition of two or three of the principal of the commandments, *ver. 1, 2.* 2. An inviting promise of all good things, if they would but keep God's commandments, *ver. 3—13.* 3. A terrible threatening of ruining judgment which would be brought upon them if they were refractory and disobedient, *ver. 14—39.* 4. A gracious promise of the return of mercy to those of them that would repent and reform, *ver. 40, &c.* Deut. xxviii. is parallel to this.

No. XX.

1. YE shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the LORD your God. 2. Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD. 3. ¶ If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments and do them; 4. Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, 5. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. 6. And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. 7. And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. 8. And five of you shall chase a hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. 9. For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you. 10. And ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new. 11. And I will set my tabernacle amongst you; and my soul shall not abhor you. 12. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people. 13. I am the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bond-men; and I have broken the bands of your yoke and made you to go upright.

Here is, 1. The inculcating of those precepts of the law which were of the greatest consequence, and by which especially their obedience will be tried, *ver. 1, 2.* They are the abstract of the second and fourth commandments: which, as they are by much the largest in the decalogue, so they are most frequently insisted on in other parts of the law. As when a master has given many things in charge to his servant, he concludes with the repetition of those things which were of the greatest importance, and which the servant was most in danger of neglecting, bidding him, whatever he did, be sure to remember those; so here God by Moses, after many precepts, closes all with a special charge to observe these two great commandments. (1.) Be sure you never worship images, nor ever make any sort of images or pictures for a religious use, *ver. 1.* No sin more provoking to God than this, and yet none that they were more addicted to, and which afterwards proved of more pernicious consequence to them. Next to God's being, unity, and universal influence, it is necessary we know and believe, that he is an infinite Spirit, and therefore to represent him by an image in the making of it, to confine him to an image in the consecrating of it, and to worship him by an image in bowing down to it, changes his truth into a lie, and his glory into shame, as much as any thing. (2.) Be sure you keep up a great veneration for sabbaths and religious assemblies, *ver. 2.* As nothing tends more to corrupt religion than the use of images in devotion, so nothing contributes more to the support of it than keeping the sabbaths, and reverencing the sanctuary. These make up very much of the instrumental part of religion, by which the essentials of it are kept up. Therefore we find in the prophets, that next to the sin of idolatry, there is no sin for which the Jews are more frequently reprov'd and threatened, than the profanation of the sabbath-day.

2. Great encouragement given to them to live in a constant obedience to all God's commandments, largely and strongly assuring them that if they did so, they would be a happy people, and should be blessed with all the good things they could desire. Human governments enforce their laws with penalties to be inflicted for the breach of them; but God will be known as the rewarder of those that seek and serve him.

Let us take a view of these great and precious promises, which though they relate chiefly to the life which now is, and to the public national concerns of that people, yet they were typical of the spiritual blessings entailed by the covenant of grace upon all believers through Christ.

1. Plenty and abundance of the fruits of the earth. They should have seasonable rain, neither too little nor too much, but what was requisite for their land, which was watered with the dew of heaven, *Deut. xi. 10, 11.* that it might yield its increase, *ver. 4.* The dependence which the fruitfulness of the earth beneath hath upon the influence of heaven above, is a sensible intimation to us, that every good and perfect gift must be expected from above, from the Father of lights. It is promised, that the earth should produce its fruits in such great abundance, that they would be kept in full employment, during both the harvest and the vintage to gather it in, *ver. 5.* Before they had reaped their corn and threshed it, the vintage would be ready: and before they had finished their vintage, it would be high time to begin their sowing. Long harvests are often with us the consequences of bad weather, but with them they should be the effects of a great increase. This signified the plenty of grace which should be poured out in gospel-times, when the ploughman should overtake the reaper, *Amos ix. 13.* and a great harvest of souls should be gathered in to Christ. The plenty should be so great, that they should bring forth the old to be given away to the poor, because of the new, to make room for it in their barns, which yet they would not pull down to build greater, as that rich fool, *Luke xii. 10.* for God gave them this abundance to be laid out, not to be hoarded up from one year to another. He that withholdeth corn the people shall curse him, *Prov. xi. 26.* That promise, *Mal. iii. 10. I will pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it*, explains this here, *ver. 10.* And that which crowns this blessing of plenty is, that, *ver. 5. you shall eat your bread to the full*; which intimates not only that they should have abundance, but that they should have content and satisfaction in it. They should have enough, and should know when they had enough. Thus the meek shall eat and be satisfied, *Psal. xxii. 26.*

2. Peace under the divine protection, *ver. 5. Ye shall dwell in your land safely*; both really safe, and safe in your own apprehension; ye shall lie down to rest in the power and promise of God, and not only none shall hurt, but none shall so much as make you afraid, *ver. 6.* see *Psal. iv. 8.* They should not be infested with wild beasts, those should be rid out of the land, or, as it is promised, *Job v. 23.* should be at peace with them; nor should they be terrified with the alarms of war, neither shall the sword go through

through the land. This holy security is promised to all the faithful, *Psalm* xci. 1, &c. Those must needs dwell in safety, that dwell in God, *Job* xi. 18, 19.

3. Victory and success in their wars abroad, while they had peace and tranquillity at home, *ver. 7, 8*. And that the hand of God should so signally appear with them in their conquests, that no disproportion of numbers should make against them. Five of you shall have courage to attack, and strength to chase and defeat a hundred, as Jonathan did, *1 Sam. xiv. 13*. experiencing the truth of his own maxim, *ver. 6*. that it is all one with the Lord to save by many or by few.

4. The increase of their people. *I will make you fruitful and multiply you*, *ver. 9*. Thus the promise made to Abraham must be fulfilled, that his seed should be as the dust of the earth; and much more numerous they had been, if they had not by their sin cut themselves short. It is promised to the gospel Church that it shall be fruitful, *John xv. 16*.

5. The favour of God, which is the fountain of all good. *I will have respect unto you*, *ver. 9*. If the eye of our faith be unto God, the eye of his favour will be unto us. More is implied than is expressed in that promise, *My soul shall not abhor you*, *ver. 11*. as there is in that threatening, *My soul shall have no pleasure in him*, *Heb. x. 38*. Though there was that among them which might justly have alienated him from them, yet if they would closely adhere to his institutions he would not abhor them.

6. The tokens of his presence in and by his ordinances; *I will set my tabernacle among you*, *ver. 11*. It was their honour and advantage that God's tabernacle was lately erected among them, but here he lets them know, that the continuance and establishment of it depended upon their good behaviour. The tabernacle that was now set should be settled if they would be obedient, else not. Note, The way to have God's ordinances fixed among us, as a nail in a sure place, is to cleave close to the institution of them. It is added, *ver. 12*. *I will walk among you*, with delight and satisfaction, as a man in his garden; I will keep up communion with you, as a man walking with his friend. This seems to be alluded to, *Rev. ii. 1*. where Christ is said to walk in the midst of the golden candlesticks.

7. The grace of the covenant, as the fountain and foundation, the sweetness and security of all these blessings; *I will establish my covenant with you*, *ver. 9*. Let them perform their part of the covenant, and God would not fail to perform his. All covenant blessings are summed up in the covenant relation, *ver. 12*. *I will be your God, and ye shall be my people*; and grounded upon their redemption, *ver. 13*. *I am your God, because I brought you out of the land of Egypt*. Having purchased them he would own them, and never cast them off till they cast him off. He broke their yoke, and made them go upright, i. e. their deliverance out of Egypt put them into a state both of ease and honour, and being delivered out of the hands of their enemies they might serve God without fear, each one walking in his uprightness. When Israel rejected Christ, and was therefore rejected by him, their back is said to be bowed down always under the burden of their guilt, which was heavier than that of their bondage in Egypt, *Rom. xi. 10*.

14. ¶ But if we will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments: 15. And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: 16. I also will do this unto you, I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it: 17. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you, and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. 18. And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. 19. And I will break the pride of your power: and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass: 20. And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits. 21. ¶ And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me, I will bring seven times more plagues upon you, according to your sins. 22. I will also send wild beasts among you which shall rob you of your children and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number, and your high ways shall be desolate. 23. And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me: 24. Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins. 25. And will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you, and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. 26. And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat and not be satisfied. 27. And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me: 28. Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury: and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. 29. And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat. 30. And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcases upon the carcases of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you. 31. And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries into desolation: and I will not smell the favour of your sweet odours. 32. And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. 33. And I will scatter you among

the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. 34. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbath as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies land; even then shall the land have rest, and enjoy her sabbaths. 35. As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest: because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it. 36. And upon them that are left alive of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies, and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword: and they shall fall when none pursueth. 37. And they shall fall one upon another, as it were before a sword, when none pursueth: and ye shall have no power to stand before your enemies. 38. And ye shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. 39. And they that are left of you, shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies land; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them.

After God had set the blessing before them, the life and good which would make them a happy people if they would be obedient, he here sets the curse before them, the death and evil which would make them as miserable if they were disobedient. Let them not think themselves so deeply rooted as that God's power could not ruin them, or so highly favoured as that his justice would not ruin them if they revolted from him, and rebelled against him; no, *You only have I known, therefore I will punish you soonest and forest*, *Amos iii. 2*.

Observe, 1. How their sin is described, which would bring all this misery upon them. Not sins of ignorance and infirmity, God had provided sacrifices for those; nor the sins they repented of and forsook, but the sins that were presumptuously committed and obstinately persisted in.

Two things would certainly bring this ruin upon them.

1. A contempt of God's commandments, *ver. 14*. *If ye will not hearken to me* speaking to you by the law, nor do all these commandments, that is, desire and endeavour to do them; and wherein you miss it, make use of the prescribed remedies. Thus their sin is supposed to begin in mere carelessness, and neglect, and omission: That is bad enough, but it makes way for worse; for they are brought in, *ver. 15*. (1.) *Despising God's statutes*, both the duties enjoined, and the authority enjoining them, thinking meanly of the law and the law-maker. Note, Those are hasting apace to their own ruin, who begin to think it below them to be religious. (2.) *Abhorring his judgments*, their very souls abhorring them. Note, They that begin to despise religion, will come by degrees to loathe it; and mean thoughts of it will ripen into ill thoughts of it; they that turn from it, will turn against it, and their hearts rise at it. (3.) *Breaking his covenant*. Though every breach of the commandment doth not amount to a breach of the covenant, we were undone if it did; yet when men are come to such a pitch of impiety, as to despise and abhor the commandment, the next step will be to disown God, and all relation to him. They that reject the precept, will come at last to renounce the covenant. Observe, It is God's covenant they break: he made it, but they break it. Note, If a covenant be made and kept between God and man, God must have all the honour. But if ever it be broken, man must bear all the blame; on him shall this breach be.

2. A contempt of his corrections. Even their disobedience would not have been their destruction, if they had not been obstinate and impenitent in it, notwithstanding the methods God took to reclaim them. Their contempt of God's word would not have brought them to ruin, if they had not added to that a contempt to his rod, which should have brought them to repentance. Three ways this is expressed. (1.) *If you will not for all this hearken to me*, *ver. 18, 21, 27*. If ye will not learn obedience by the things which you suffer, but be as deaf to the loud alarms of God's judgments, as you have been to the close reasonings of his word, and the secret whispers of your own consciences, you are obstinate indeed. (2.) *If ye will walk contrary to me*, *ver. 21, 23, 27*. All sinners walk contrary to God, to his truths, laws, and counsels, but those especially that are incorrigible under his judgments. The design of the rod is to humble them, and soften them, and bring them to repentance; but instead of this their hearts are more hardened and exasperated against God, and in their distress they trespass yet more against him, *2 Chron. xxviii. 22*. this is walking contrary to God. Some read it, *If ye walk at all adventures with me*, carelessly and presumptuously, as if you heeded not either what you do, whether it be right or wrong, or what God doth with you, whether it be for you, or against you, blundering on in wilful ignorance. (3.) *If ye will not be reformed by these things*. God's design in punishing is to reform, by giving men sensible convictions of the evil of sin, and obliging them to seek unto him for relief: this is the primary intention; but those that will not be reformed by the judgments of God, must expect to be ruined by them. Those have a great deal to answer for, that have been long and often under God's correcting hand, and yet go on forwardly in a sinful way; sick and in pain, and yet not reformed; crossed and impoverished, and yet not reformed; broken with breach upon breach; yet not returning to the Lord, *Amos iv. 6, &c*.

2. How the misery is described, which their sin would bring upon them, under two heads.

1. God himself would be against them; and this is the root and cause of all their misery. (1.) *I will set my face against you*, *ver. 17*. i. e. I will set my face against you, set myself to ruin you. These proud sinners God will resist, and face those down that confront his authority. Or, the face is put for the anger; I will shew myself highly displeased at you. (2.) *I will walk contrary to you*, *ver. 21, 28*. with the froward he will wrestle, *Psalm. xviii. 26*. When God in his providence thwarts the designs of a people, which they thought well laid, crosseth their purposes, breaks their measures, blasts their endeavours, and disappoints their expectations, then he walks contrary to them. Note, There is nothing got by striving with God Almighty, for he will either break the heart or break the neck of those that contend with him; will bring them either to repentance or ruin. I will walk at all adventures with you, so some read; all covenant loving-kindness shall be forgotten, and I will leave you to common providence. Note, Those that cast God off, it is just with him to cast them off. (3.) As they continued obstinate, the judgments should increase yet more upon them. If the first sensible tokens of God's displeasure do not attain their end to humble and reform them, then, *ver. 18*. *I will punish you seven times more*, and again, *ver. 21*. *I will bring seven times more plagues*, and *ver. 24*. *I will punish you yet seven times*, and *ver. 28*, *I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins*. Note, If less judgments do not do their work, God will send greater: for when he judgeth he will overcome. If true repentance do not stay process, it will go on till execution

ecution be taken out. Those that are obstinate and incorrigible, when they have weathered one storm, must expect another more violent; and how severely soever they are punished, till they are in hell, still they must say there is worse behind unless they repent. If the *founder* have hitherto melted in vain, (Jer. vi. 29.) the furnace will be heated *seven times hotter*, (a proverbial expression used Dan. iii. 19.) and again and again *seven times hotter*; and who among us can dwell with such devouring fire? God doth not begin with the forest judgments, to shew that he is patient, and delights not in the death of sinners; but if they repent not he will proceed to the forest, to shew that he is righteous, and that he will not be mocked or set at defiance. (4.) Their misery is completed in this threatening, ver. 30. *My soul shall abhor you*. That man is as miserable as he can be whom God abhors: for his resentments are just and effective. Thus if any man draw back, as these are here supposed to do, *God's soul shall have no pleasure in him*, Heb. x. 38. and he will *spue them out of his mouth*, Rev. iii. 16. It is spoken of as strange and yet too true, *Hath thy soul louted Zion?* Jer. xiv. 19.

2. The whole creation would be at war with them. All God's fore judgments would be sent against them; for he hath many arrows in his quiver. The threatenings here are very particular, because really they were prophecies; and he that foresaw all their rebellions, knew they would prove so; see Deut. xxi. 16—19. This long roll of threatenings shews, that evil pursues sinners.

Here is, 1. Temporal judgments threatened. (1.) Diseases of body, which should be epidemical, ver. 16. *I will appoint over you as task-masters to rule you with rigour, terror, consumption, and the burning ague*. What we translate terror, some think signifies a particular disease, probably (saith the learned Bishop Patrick) the falling-sickness, which is terror indeed: all chronic diseases are included in the consumption; and all acute diseases in the burning ague or fever. These consume the eyes, and cause sorrow both to those that are visited with them, and to their friends and relations. Note, All diseases are God's servants, and do what he appoints them, and are often used as scourges wherewith he chastiseth a provoking people. The pestilence is threatened, ver. 25. to meet them when they are gathered together in their cities, for fear of the sword. And the greater the concourse of people is, the greater desolation doth the pestilence make; and when it gets among the soldiers that should defend a place, it is of most fatal consequence. (2.) Famine and scarcity of bread, which should be brought upon them several ways; as, 1. by plunder, ver. 16. *Your enemies shall eat it up*, and carry it off as the Midianites did, Judg. vi. 5, 6. (2.) By unseasonable weather, especially the want of rain, ver. 19. *I will make your heaven as iron*, letting fall no rain, but reflecting heat, and then the earth would of course be as dry and hard as brass; and their labour in plowing and sowing would be in vain, ver. 20. For the increase of the earth depends upon God's good providence, more than upon man's good husbandry. This should be the breaking of the staff of bread, (ver. 26.) which life leans upon, and is supported by, and which perhaps they had leaned more upon than on God's blessing. There should be so great a dearth of corn, that whereas every family used to fill an oven of their own with household bread, now ten families should have to fill but one oven; which would bring themselves and their children and servants to short allowance, so that they should eat and not be justified. The less they had, the more craving should their appetites be. 3. By the besieging of their cities; for sure that must be supposed to reduce them to such an extremity, as that they should eat the flesh of their sons and daughters, ver. 29. (3.) War, and the prevalency of their enemies over them; *Ye shall be slain before your enemies*, ver. 17. Your choice men shall die in battle, and they that hate you shall reign over you, and justly, since you are not willing that the God that loved you should reign over you; 2 Chron. xii. 8. Miserable is that people whose enemies are their rulers, and have got dominion over them; or whose rulers are become their enemies, and under-hand seek the ruin of their interests. Thus God would break the pride of their power, ver. 19. God had given them power over the nations; but when they instead of being thankful for that power, and improving it for the service of God's kingdom, grew proud of it, and perverted the intentions of it, it was just with God to break it. Thus God would bring a sword upon them to avenge the quarrel of his covenant, ver. 25. Note, God has a just quarrel with those that break covenant with him, for he will not be mocked by the treachery of perfidious men; and one way or other he will avenge his quarrel upon those that play fast and loose with him. (4.) Wild beasts, lions and bears, and wolves, which should increase upon them, and tear in pieces all that came in their way, ver. 22. as we read of two bears that in an instant killed forty-two children, 2 Kings ii. 21. This is one of the four fore judgments threatened, Ezek. xiv. 21. which plainly refers to this chapter. Man was made to have dominion over the creatures, and though many of them are stronger than he, yet none of them could have hurt him; nay all of them should have served him, if he had not first shaken off God's dominion, and so lost his own; and now the creatures are in rebellion against him that are in rebellion against his Maker, and when the Lord of those hosts pleaseth, are the executioners of his wrath, and ministers of his justice. (5.) Captivity or dispersion: *I will scatter you among the heathen*, ver. 33. *in your enemies' land*, ver. 34. Never were more people so incorporated and united among themselves as they were, but for their sin God would scatter them, so that they should be lost among the heathen, from whom God had graciously distinguished them, but with whom they had wickedly mingled themselves. Yet when they were scattered, divine justice had not done with them, but would draw out a sword after them, which would find them out, and follow them wherever they were: God's judgments, as they cannot be out-faced, so they cannot be outrun. (6.) The utter ruin and desolation of their land; which should be so remarkable, that their very enemies themselves, who had helped it forward, should in the review be astonished at it, ver. 32. (1.) Their cities should be waste, forsaken, uninhabited, and all their buildings destroyed: those that escaped the desolations of war, should fall to decay of themselves. (2.) Their sanctuaries should be a desolation, i. e. their synagogues where they met for religious worship every sabbath, as well as their tabernacle, where they met thrice a year. (3.) The country itself should be desolate, not tilled or husbanded, ver. 34, 35. then the land should enjoy its sabbaths, because they had not religiously observed the sabbatical years which God appointed them. They tilled their ground when God would have them let it rest, justly therefore were they driven out of it; and the expression intimates, that the ground itself was pleased and easy, when it was rid of the burden of such sinners, under which it had groaned, Rom. viii. 20, &c. The captivity in Babylon lasted seventy years; and so long the land enjoyed her sabbaths, as is said, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21. with reference to this here. (7.) The destruction of their idols, though rather a mercy than a judgment, yet being a necessary piece of justice, is here mentioned, to shew what would be the sin that would bring all these miseries upon them, ver. 30. *I will destroy your high places*. Those that will not be parted from their sins by the commands of God, shall be parted from them by his judgments; since they would not destroy their high-places, God would. And to upbraid them with the unreasonable fondness they had shewed for their idols, it is foretold, that their carcasses should be cast upon the carcasses of their idols. They that are wedded to their lusts, sooner or later will have enough of them.

Their idols would not either be able to help themselves or their worshippers; but they that made them being like unto them, both should perish alike and fall together as blind into the ditch.

2. Spiritual judgments are here threatened, which should seize the mind; for he that made that, can, when he pleaseth, make his sword approach to it.

It is here threatened, 1. That they should find no acceptance with God, ver. 31. *I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours*. Though the judgments of God upon them did not part between them and their sins, yet they extorted incense from them; but in vain, even their incense was an abomination, Isa. i. 11.

2. That they should have no courage in their wars, but should be quite dispirited and disheartened. They should not only fear and flee, (ver. 17.) but fear and fall when none pursueth, ver. 36. A guilty conscience would be their continual terror, so that not only the sound of a trumpet, but the very sound of a leaf should chase them. Note, Those that cast off the fear of God, expose themselves to the fear of every thing else, Prov. xxviii. 1. Their very fears should dash them one against another, ver. 37, 38. And they that had increased one another's guilt, would now increase one another's fears.

4. That they should have no hope of the forgiveness of their sins, ver. 39. *They shall pine away in their iniquity, and how should they then live?* Ezek. xxxiii. 10. Note, It is a righteous thing with God to leave those to despair of pardon, that have presumed to sin; and it is owing to free grace if we are not abandoned to pine away in the iniquity we were born in, and have lived in.

40. If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespasses which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; 41. And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: 42. Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land. 43. The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them, and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they despised my judgment, and because their soul abhorred my statutes. 44. And yet for all that when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the LORD their God. 45. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt, in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I am the LORD. 46. These are the statutes, and judgments, and laws, which the LORD made between him and the children of Israel in mount Sinai, by the hand of Moses.

Here the chapter concludes with gracious promises of the return of God's favour to them upon their repentance, that they might not (unless it were their own fault) pine away in their iniquity. Behold with wonder the riches of God's mercy to a people that had obstinately stood it out against the judgments of God, and would never think of surrendering till they were reduced to the last extremity. Yet turn ye to the strong-hold ye prisoners of hope, Zech. ix. 12. As bad as things are, they may be mended, Yet there is hope in Israel.

Observe, 1. How the repentance is described, which would qualify them for this mercy, ver. 41, 42. The instances of it are there, (1.) Confession, by which they must give glory to God, and take shame to themselves. There must be a confession of sin; their own and their fathers, which they must lament the guilt of because they feel the smart of it; that thus they may cut off the entail of wrath; they must in their confession put sin under its worst character, as walking contrary to God; this is the sinfulness of sin, the worst thing in it, and which in our repentance we should especially bewail. There must also be a confession of wrath; they must overlook the instruments of their trouble, and the second causes, and confess that God has walked contrary to them, and so dealt with them according to their sins. Such a confession as this we find made by Daniel just before the dawning of the day of their deliverance, chap. ix. and the like, Ezra ix. and Neh. ix. (2.) Remorse and godly sorrow for sin; *If their uncircumcised heart be humbled*. An impatient, unbelieving, unhumiliated heart is called an uncircumcised heart, the heart of a Gentile, that is a stranger to God, rather than the heart of an Israelite in covenant with him. True circumcision is of the heart, Rom. ii. 29. without which the circumcision of the flesh availed nothing, Jer. ix. 26. Now in repentance this uncircumcised heart was humbled, i. e. it was truly broken and contrite for sin. Note, An humble heart under humbling providences, prepares for deliverance and true comfort. (3.) Submission to the justice of God in all his dealings; if they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity, ver. 41. and again, ver. 43. i. e. if they justify God and condemn themselves, patiently bear the punishment as that which they have well deserved, and carefully answers the end of it, as that which God has well designed, accept it as a kindness, take it as physic, and improve it, then they are penitents indeed.

2. How the mercy is described, which they should obtain upon their repentance. (1.) They should not be abandoned; *Though they have despised my judgments, yet for all that I will not cast them away*, ver. 43; 44. He speaks as a tender father that cannot find in his heart to disinherit a son that has been very provoking, *How shall I do it?* Hos. xi. 8, 9. Till he had laid the foundations of a Church for himself in the Gentile world, the Jewish church was not quite forsaken, nor cast away. (2.) They should be remembered; *I will remember the land with favour*, which is grounded upon the promise before; *I will remember my covenant*, ver. 42. which is repeated, ver. 45. God is said to remember the covenant, when he performs the promises of it, purely for his faithfulness sake; not because there is any thing in us to recommend us to his favour, but because he will be as good as his word. This is the church's plea, Psal. lxxiv. 20. *Have respect unto the*

the covenant. He will remember the constitution of the covenant, which is such as leaves room for repentance, and promiseth pardon upon repentance; and the mediator of the covenant, who was promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and was sent when the fulness of time came, *in remembrance of that holy covenant*. The word covenant is thrice repeated to intimate, that God is ever mindful of it, and would have us to be so. The persons also with whom the covenant was made, are mentioned in an unusual manner, *per modum ascensus*, beginning with Jacob, to lead them gradually to the most ancient promise, which was made to the father of the faithful: thus Micah vii. 20. he is said to perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham. He will for their sakes (ver. 45.) not their merits sake, but their benefit sakes, remember the covenant of their ancestors, and upon that score shew kindness to them, though most unworthy; they are therefore said to be, *as touching the election, beloved for the father's sakes*, Rom. xi. 28. Note, When those that have walked contrary to God in a way of sin, return to him by sincere repentance, though he has walked contrary to them in a way of judgment, he will return to them in a way of special mercy, pursuant to the covenants of redemption and grace. None are so ready to repent, as God is to forgive upon repentance, through Christ, who is given for a covenant.

Lastly, These are said to be the laws which the Lord made between him and the children of Israel, ver. 46. His communion with his church is kept up by his law. He manifests not only his dominion over them, but his favour to them, by giving them his law; and they manifest not only their holy fear, but their holy love by the observance of it; and thus it is made between them, rather as a covenant than a law: for he draws with the cords of a man.

C H A P. XXVII.

The last verse of the foregoing chapter seemed to close up this statute-book, yet this chapter is added as an appendix: having given laws concerning appointed instituted services, here he directs concerning vows and voluntary services, the free-will offerings of their mouth. Perhaps some devout, serious people among them might be so affected with what Moses had delivered to them in the foregoing chapter, as in a pang of zeal to consecrate themselves or their children, or estates, to him; this, because honestly meant, God would accept of; but because men are apt to repent such vows, he leaves room for the redemption of what had been so consecrated at a certain rate. Here is, 1. The law concerning what was sanctified to God; persons, ver. 2—8. Cattle, clean, or unclean, ver. 9—13. Houses and lands, ver. 14—25. With an exception of firstlings, ver. 26, 27. 2. Concerning what was devoted, ver. 28, 29. 3. Concerning tithes, ver. 30—34.

1. **AND** the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say, unto them, When a man shall make a singular vow, the persons shall be for the LORD, by thy estimation. 3. And thy estimation shall be, of the male from twenty years old, even unto sixty years old; even thy estimation shall be fifty shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary. 4. And if it be a female, then thy estimation shall be thirty shekels. 5. And if it be from five years old, even unto twenty years old; then thy estimation shall be of the male twenty shekels, and for the female ten shekels. 6. And if it be from a month old, even unto five years old, then thy estimation shall be of the male, five shekels of silver, and for the female, thy estimation shall be three shekels of silver. 7. And if it be from sixty years old, and above; if it be a male, then thy estimation shall be fifteen shekels, and for the female ten shekels. 8. But if he be poorer than thy estimation, then he shall present himself before the priest, and the priest shall value him: according to his ability that vowed, shall the priest value him. 9. And if it be a beast whereof men bring an offering unto the LORD; all that any man giveth of such unto the LORD, shall be holy. 10. He shall not alter it, nor change it, a good for a bad, or a bad for a good: and if he shall at all change beast for beast, then it and the exchange thereof shall be holy. 11. And if it be any unclean beast, of which they do not offer a sacrifice unto the LORD; then he shall present the beast before the priest: 12. And the priest shall value it, whether it be good or bad: as thou valuest it, who art the priest, so shall it be. 13. But if he will at all redeem it, then he shall add a fifth part thereof unto thy estimation.

This is part of the law concerning singular vows, extraordinary ones, which though God did not expressly insist on, yet if they were consistent with, and conformable to, the general precepts, he would be well pleased with. Note, We should not only ask what must we do, but what may we do, for the glory and honour of God? As the liberal deviseth liberal things, (Isa. xxxii. 8.) so the pious deviseth pious things, and the enlarged heart would willingly do something extraordinary in the service of so good a master as God is. When we receive or exact some singular mercy, it is good to honour God with some singular vow.

1. The case is here put to persons vowed to God by a singular vow, ver. 2. If a man consecrated himself, or a child, to the service of the tabernacle, to be employed there in some inferior office, as sweeping the floor, carrying out ashes, running on errands, or the like, the person so consecrated shall be for the Lord, i. e. God will graciously accept the good will; Thou didst well that it was in thine heart, (2 Chron. vi. 8.) but so far as he had no occasion to use their service about the tabernacle, a whole tribe being appropriated to the use of it, those that were thus vowed were to be redeemed, and the money paid for their redemption was employed for the repair of the sanctuary, or other uses of it; as appears by 2 Kings xii. 4. where it is called in the margin, the money of the souls of his estimation.

A book of rates is accordingly provided here, by which the priests were to go in their estimation. Here is, 1. The rate of the middle aged between twenty and threescore, these were valued highest, because most serviceable; a male fifty shekels, and the female thirty, ver. 3, 4. The females were then less esteemed, but not so in Christ; for in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, Gal. iii. 28. Note, Those that are in the prime of their time, must look upon themselves as obliged to do more in the service of God and their generation, than can be expected either from minors, that are not yet arrived to their usefulness, or from the aged, that have survived it. 2. The rate of the youth between five years old and twenty was less, because they were then less capable of doing service, ver. 5. 3. Infants under five years old were capable of being vowed to God by their parents, even before they were born, as Samuel was, but not to be presented and redeemed till a month old: that as one sabbath passed over them before they were circumcised, so one new moon might pass over them before they were estimated; and their valuation was but small, ver. 6. Samuel, who was thus vowed to God, was not redeemed, because he was a Levite, and a particular favourite, and therefore was employed in his childhood in the service of the tabernacle. 4. The aged are valued less than youth, but more than children, ver. 7. And the Hebrews observe, that the rate of an aged woman is two parts of three to that of an aged man, so that in that age the female came nearest to the value of the male, which occasioned (as Bishop Patrick quotes it here) this saying among them, *That an old woman in a house is a treasure in a house*. St. Paul sets a great value upon the aged women, when he makes them teachers of good things, Tit. ii. 3. 5. The poor shall be valued according to their ability, ver. 8. Something they must pay, that they might learn not to be rash in vowing to God, for he hath no pleasure in fools, Eccl. v. 4. Yet not more than his ability, but *secundum tenementum*, that he might not ruin himself and his family by his zeal. Note, God expects and requires from men, according to what they have, and not according to what they have not, Luke xxi. 4.

2. The case is put of beasts vowed to God. 1. If it were a clean beast, such as was offered in sacrifice, it must not be redeemed, nor any equivalent given for it; it shall be holy, ver. 9, 10. after it was vowed it was not to be put to any common use, nor changed upon second thoughts; but it must be either offered upon the altar, or if through any blemish it was not meet to be offered, or that vowed it should not take advantage of that, but the priests should have it for their own use, (for they were God's receivers) or it should be sold for the service of the sanctuary. This teacheth caution in making vows, and constancy in keeping them when they are made; for it is a shame to a man to devour that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry, Prov. xx. 25. And to this that rule of charity seems to allude, 2 Cor. ix. 7. Every man according as he pursueth in his heart, so let him give. 3. If it were an unclean beast, it should go to the use of the priest at such a value; but he that vowed it upon paying that value in money, and adding a fifth part more to it, might redeem it if he pleased, ver. 11, 12, 13. It was fit men should smart for their inconstancy. God has let us know his mind concerning his service, and he is not pleased if we do not know our own. God expects that those that deal with him should be at a point, and say what they will stand to.

14. ¶ And when a man shall sanctify his house to be holy unto the LORD: then the priest shall estimate it, whether it be good or bad: as the priest shall estimate it, so it shall stand. 15. And if he that sanctified it, will redeem his house, then he shall add the fifth part of the money of thy estimation unto it, and it shall be his. 16. And if a man shall sanctify unto the LORD some part of a field of his possession; then thy estimation shall be according to the seed thereof: an homer of barley seed shall be valued at fifty shekels of silver. 17. If he sanctify his field from the year of jubilee, according to thy estimation it shall stand. 18. But if he sanctify his field after the jubilee; then the priest shall reckon unto him the money according to the years that remain, even unto the year of the jubilee; and it shall be abated from thy estimation. 19. And if he that sanctified the field will in any wise redeem it: then he shall add the fifth part of the money of thy estimation unto it, and it shall be assured to him. 20. And if he will not redeem the field, or if he have sold the field to another man; it shall not be redeemed any more. 21. But the field, when it goeth out in the jubilee, shall be holy unto the LORD, as a field devoted; the possession thereof shall be the priests. 22. And if a man sanctify unto the LORD a field which he hath bought, which is not of the fields of his possession; 23. Then the priest shall reckon unto him the worth of thy estimation, even unto the year of the jubilee; and he shall give thine estimation in that day as a holy thing unto the LORD. 24. In the year of the jubilee, the field shall return unto him of whom it was bought; even to him to whom the possession of the land did belong. 25. And all thy estimation shall be according to the shekel of the sanctuary: twenty gerahs shall be the shekel.

Here is the law concerning real estates dedicated to the service of God by a singular vow. 1. Suppose a man in his zeal for the honour of God sanctify his house to God, ver. 14. the house must be valued by the priest, and the money got by the sale of it was to be converted to the use of the sanctuary, which by degrees came to be enriched greatly with dedicated things, 1 Kings xv. 15. But if the owner be minded to redeem it himself, he must not have it so cheap as another, but must add a fifth part to the price, for he should have considered before he had vowed it, ver. 15. To him that was necessitous God would abate of the estimation of himself, ver. 8. But to him that was sly and humourous, and whose second thoughts inclined more to the world and his secular interest, than his first, God would rise in the price. Blessed be God there is a way of sanctifying our houses to be holy unto the Lord, with either selling them, or buying them. If we and our houses serve the Lord, if religion rule in them, and we put away iniquity far from them, and have a Church in our house, holiness to the Lord is written upon it, it is his, and he will dwell with us in it. 2. Suppose a

man sanctify some part of his land to the Lord, giving it to pious uses, then a difference must be made between land that came to the donor by descent, and that which came by purchase, and accordingly the case altered. (1.) If it were the inheritance of his fathers, here called the *field of his possession*, which pertained to his family from the first division of Canaan, he might not give it all, no not to the sanctuary; God would not admit such a degree of zeal as ruined a man's family. But he might sanctify or dedicate only some part of it, *ver. 16*. And in that case, 1. The land was to be valued (as our countrymen commonly compute land) by so many measures sowing of barley. So much land as would take a homer, or chomer of barley, which contained ten ephahs, *Ezek. xlv. 11*. (not as some have here mistaken it, an homer, which was but a tenth part of one ephah, *Exod. xvi. 36*.) was valued at fifty shekels, a moderate price, *ver. 16*. and that, if it were sanctified immediately from the year of jubilee, *ver. 17*. But if some years after, there was to be a discount accordingly, even of that price, *ver. 18*. And, 2. When the value was fixed, the donor might, if he pleased, redeem it for sixty shekels the homer's sowing, which was with the addition of a fifth part, the money then went to the sanctuary, and the land reverted to him that had sanctified it, *ver. 19*. But if he would not redeem it, and the priest sold it to another, then at the year of jubilee, beyond which the sale could not go, the land came to the priests, and was theirs for ever, *ver. 20, 21*. Note, What is given to the Lord ought not to be given with a power of revocation; what is devoted to the Lord must be his for ever by a perpetual covenant. (2.) If the land were his own purchase, and came not to him from his ancestors, then not the land itself, but the value of it, was to be given to the priests for pious uses, *ver. 22, 23, 24*. It was supposed, that those who by the blessing of God were grown so rich as to become purchasers, would think themselves obliged in gratitude to sanctify some part of their purchase, at least (and here they are not limited, but that they might if they pleased sanctify the whole) to the service of God. For we ought to give as God prospers us, *1 Cor. xvi. 2*. Purchasers are in a special manner bound to be charitable. Now forasmuch as purchased lands were by a former law to return at the year of jubilee to the family from which they were purchased, God would not have that law and the intentions of it defeated, by making the lands Corban, a gift, (*Mark vii. 11*.) But it was to be computed how much the land was worth for so many years as were from the vow to the jubilee, for only so long it was his own, and God hates robbery for burnt-offerings; and we can never acceptably serve God with that which we have wronged our neighbour of. And so much money he was to give at present, and keep the land in his own hands till the year of jubilee, when it was to return free of all incumbrances, even that of its being dedicated to him of whom it was bought. The value of the shekel by which all these estimations were to be made is here ascertained, *ver. 25*. it shall be twenty gerahs, and every gerah was sixteen barley-corns. This was fixed before, *Exod. xxx. 13*. and whereas there had been some alterations, it is again fixed in the laws of Ezekiel's visionary temple, *Ezek. xlv. 12*. to note that the gospel should reduce things to their ancient standard.

26. ¶ Only the firstlings of the beasts, which should be the LORD's firstling, no man shall sanctify it, whether it be ox, or sheep: it is the LORD's. 27. And if it be of an unclean beast, then he shall redeem it according to thine estimation, and shall add a fifth part of it thereto: or if it be not redeemed, then it shall be sold according to thy estimation. 28. Notwithstanding, no devoted thing that a man shall devote unto the LORD, of all that he hath, both of man and beast, and of the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed: every devoted thing is most holy unto the LORD. 29. None devoted, which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed: but shall surely be put to death. 30. And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's: it is holy unto the LORD. 31. And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part hereof. 32. And concerning the tithe of the herd or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod: the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD. 33. He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it: and if he change it at all, then both it and the change thereof shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed. 34.

These are the commandments which the LORD commanded Moses, for the children of Israel, in mount Sinai.

Here is, 1. A caution given that no man should make such a jest of sanctifying things to the Lord, as to sanctify any firstling to him, for that was his already by the law, *ver. 26*. Though the matter of a general vow be that which we were before obliged to, as of our sacramental covenant, yet a singular vow should be of that which we were not in such circumstances and proportions antecedently bound to. The law concerning the firstlings of unclean beasts, *ver. 27*. is the same with that before, *ver. 11, 12*. 2. Things or persons devoted, are here distinguished from things or persons that were only sanctified. (1.) Devoted things were most holy to the Lord, and could neither revert, nor be alienated, *ver. 28*. They were of the same nature with those sacrifices which were called most holy, which none might touch but only the priests themselves. The difference between those and other sanctified things arose from the different expression of the vow. If a man dedicated any thing to God, binding himself with a solemn curse never to alienate it to any other purpose, then it was a thing devoted. (2.) Devoted persons were to be put to death, *ver. 29*. Not that it was in the power of any parent or master thus to devote a child or servant to death; but it must be meant of the public enemies of Israel, who, either by the appointment of God, or the sentence of the congregation, were devoted, as the seven nations with which they must make no league. The city of Jericho in particular was thus devoted, *Josh. vi. 17*. The inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead were put to death for violating the curse pronounced upon those that came not up to Mizpeh, *Judg. xxi. 9, 10*. Some think it was for want of being rightly informed of the true intent and meaning of this law, that Jephtha sacrificed his daughter, as one devoted, which might not be redeemed. 3. A law concerning tithes, which were paid for the service of God before the law; as appears by Abraham's payment of them, *Gen. xiv. 19*. and Jacob's promise of them, *Gen. xxviii. 22*. It is here appointed, 1. That they should pay tithe of all their increase, their corn, trees, and cattle, *ver. 30—32*. Whatsoever products they had the benefit of, God must be honoured with the tithe of, if it were tithable. Thus they acknowledged God to be the owner of their land, the giver of its fruits, and themselves to be his tenants, and dependents upon him: Thus they gave him thanks for the plenty they enjoyed, and supplicated his favour in the continuance of it: And we are taught in general to honour the Lord with our substance, *Prov. viii. 9*. and in particular to support and maintain his ministers, and to be ready to communicate to them, *Gal. vi. 6*. *1 Cor. ix. 11*. And how this may be done in a fitter and more equal proportion than that of the tenth, which God himself appointed of old, I cannot see. 2. That which was once marked for tithe should not be altered, no not for a better, *ver. 33*. for providence directed the rod that marked them: God would accept it though it were not the best, and they must not grudge though it were, for it was what passed under the rod. 3. That it should not be redeemed, unless the owner would give a fifth part more for its ransom, *ver. 31*. If men had the curiosity to prefer what was marked for tithe before any other part of their increase, it was fit they should pay for their curiosity.

The last verse seems to have reference to this whole book, which it is the conclusion of; These are the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses, for the children of Israel. Many of these commandments are moral, and of perpetual obligation; others of them ceremonial, and peculiar to the Jewish economy, which yet have a spiritual significance, and are instructive to us, who are furnished with a key to let us into the mysteries contained in them; for unto us by these institutions is the gospel preached as well as unto them, *Heb. iv. 2*. And upon the whole matter we may see cause to bless God that we are not come to mount Sinai, *Heb. xii. 18*. 1. That we are not under the dark shadows of the law, but enjoy the clear light of the Gospel, which shews us, Christ the end of the law for righteousness, *Rom. x. 4*. The doctrine of our reconciliation to God by a Mediator is not clouded with the smoke of burning sacrifices, but cleared by the knowledge of Christ, and him crucified. 2. That we are not under the heavy yoke of the law, and the carnal ordinances of it, (as the apostle calls them, *Heb. ix. 10*.) imposed till the time of reformation, a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear, *Acts xv. 10*. but under the sweet and easy institutions of the Gospel, which pronounces those the true worshippers, that worship the Father in spirit and truth, by Christ only, and in his name, who is our priest, temple, altar, sacrifice, purification, and all. Let us not therefore think that, because we are not tied to the ceremonial cleansings, feasts, and oblations, a little care, time, and expence, will serve to honour God with: No, but rather have our hearts more enlarged in free-will offerings to his praise, more inflamed with holy love and joy, and more engaged in seriousness of thought, and sincerity of intention; having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart, and in full assurance of faith, worshipping God with so much the more cheerfulness and humble confidence still saying, Blessed be God for Jesus Christ.



AN
E X P O S I T I O N,
WITH
P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,
Upon the FOURTH Book of MOSES called
N U M B E R S.

The titles of the five books of Moses, which we use in our Bibles, are all borrowed from the Greek translation of the Seventy, the most ancient version of the Old Testament that we know of: But the title of this book only we turn into English; in all the rest we retain the Greek word itself; for which difference I know no reason, but the Latin translators have generally done the same. Otherwise this book might as well have been called *Arithmoi*, the Greek title, as the first Genesis, and the second Exodus; or those might as well have been translated, and called, the first the Generation, or Original, the second the Out-let, or Escape, as this Numbers.—This book was thus entitled because of the numbers of the children of Israel, so often mentioned in this book, and so well worthy to give a title to it, because it was the remarkable accomplishment of God's promise to Abraham, that his seed should be as the stars of Heaven for multitude. It also relates to two numberings of them, one at mount Sinai, *chap. i.* The other in the plains of Moab, thirty-nine years after, *chap. xxxvi.* And not three men the same in the last account that were in the first. The book is almost equally divided between histories and laws, intermixed. 1. We have here the histories of the numbering and marshalling of the tribes, *chap. i—iv.* The dedication of the altar and Levites, *chap. vii. viii.* Their march, ix. x. Their murmuring and unbelief, for which they were sentenced to wander forty years in the wilderness, *chap. xi—xiv.* The rebellion of Korah, *chap. xvi. xvii.* And the history of the last year of the forty, *chap. xx—xxxvi.* The conquest of Midian, and the settlement of two tribes, *chap. xxxi. xxxii.* With an account of their journeys, *chap. xxxiii.* 2. We have divers laws, about the Nazarites, &c. *chap. v. vi.* And again, about the priests charge, &c. *chap. xviii. xix.* Feasts, *chap. xxviii. xxix.* And vows, *chap. xxx.* And relating their settlement in Canaan, *chap. xxxvii. xxxiv. xxxv. xxxvi.* An abstract of much of this book, we have in a few words, *Psal. xc. 10. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation*, and an application of it to ourselves, *Heb. iv. 1. Let us fear lest we seem to come short.* Many considerable nations there were now in being, that dwelt in cities and fortified towns, of which no notice is taken, no account kept, by the sacred history: But very exact records are kept of the affairs of a handful of people, that dwelt in tents, and wandered strangely in a wilderness, because they were the children of the covenant: *For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.*

O H A P. I.

Israel was now to be formed into a commonwealth, or a kingdom rather; for the Lord was their King, (1 Sam. xii. 12.) their government a theocracy, and Moses under him was King in Jehurun, Deut. xxxiii. 5. Now for the right settlement of this holy state, next to the institution of good laws, was necessary the institution of good order; an account therefore must be taken of the subjects of this kingdom, which is done in this chapter. Where we have, 1. Orders given to Moses to number the people, ver. 1—4. 2. Persons nominated to assist him herein, ver. 5—16. 3. The particular number of each tribe, as it was given in to Moses, ver. 17—43. 4. The Sum total of all together, ver. 44—46. 5. An exception of the Levites, ver. 47—54.

1. **A**ND the LORD spake unto Moses, in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the second month, in the second year, after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, 2. Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel after their families by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their poll. 3. From twenty years old and upward all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies. 4. And with you there shall be a man of every tribe: every one head of the house of his fathers. 5. ¶ And these are the names of the men that shall stand with you: Of the tribe of Reuben: Elizur the son of Shedeur. 6. Of Simeon: Shelumiel, the son of Zurishaddai. 7. Of Judah: Nahshon, the son of Amminadab. 8. Of Issachar: Nethaneel, the son of Zur. 9. Of Zebulun: Eliab, the son of Helon. 10. Of the children of Joseph: Of Ephraim: Elishama, the son of Ammihud: of Manasseh: Gamaliel, the son of Pedahzur. 11. Of Benjamin: Abidan, the son of Gideoni. 12. Of Dan: Ahiezer, the son of Ammishaddai. 14. Of Asher: Pagiel, the son of Ocran. 14. Of Gad: Eliasaph, the son of Deuel. 15. Of Naphtali: Ahira, the son of Enan. 15. These were the renowned of the congregation, princes of the tribes of their fathers, heads of thousands in Israel.

Here is a commission issued out for the numbering of the people of Israel; and David, long after, paid dear for doing it without a commission. Here is, 1. The date of this commission, *ver. 1.* The place; it is given at God's court in the wilderness of Sinai; from his royal palace, the tabernacle of the congregation. The time; in the second year after they came up out of Egypt,

we may call it the second year of that reign. The laws in Leviticus were given in the first month of that year; these orders were given in the beginning of the second month. 1. The directions given for the execution of it, *ver. 2, 3.* (1.) None were to be numbered but the males, and those only such as were fit for war. None under twenty years old, for though some such might have bulk and strength enough for military service; yet in compassion to their tender years, God would not have them put upon it to bear arms. (2.) Nor were any to be numbered, that through age or bodily infirmity, blindness, lameness, or chronical diseases were unfit for war. The Church being militant, those only are reputed the true members of it, that have lifted themselves soldiers of Jesus Christ, for our life, our Christian life, is a warfare. (3.) The account was to be taken according to their families, that it might not only be known how many they were, and what were their names, but of what tribe, and family, or clan; nay, of what particular house every person was; or, reckoning it the muster of an army, to what regiment every man belonged, that he might know his place himself, and the government might know where to find him. They were numbered a little before this, when their poll-money was paid for the service of the tabernacle, *Exod. xxxviii. 25, 26.* But it should seem they were not then registered by the house of their fathers, as now they were. That number and this is the same, Six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty men, for as many as had died since then and were lost in the account, so many were arrived to be twenty years old, and were added to the account. Note, As one generation passeth away another generation cometh. As vacancies are daily made, so recruits are daily raised to fill up the vacancies; and providence takes care that one time or other, in one place or other, the births shall balance the burials, that the race of mankind and the holy seed may not be cut off and extinct. 3. Commissioners are named for the doing of this work. Moses and Aaron were to preside, *ver. 3.* and one man of every tribe, that was renowned in his tribe, and was presumed to know it well, was to assist in it: the princes of the tribes, *ver. 16.* Note, Those that are honourable should study to be serviceable; he that is great, let him be your minister, and shew by his knowing the public, that he deserves to be publicly known. The charge of this muster was committed to him, who was the lord lieutenant of that tribe.

Now why was this account ordered to be taken and kept? For several reasons. 1. To prove the accomplishment of the promise made to Abraham, that God would multiply his seed exceedingly; and renewed in Jacob, *Gen. xxviii. 14.* that his seed should be as the dust of the earth; now it appears, that there did not fail one tittle of that good promise, which was an encouragement to them to hope, that the other promise of the land of Canaan for an inheritance, should also be fulfilled in its season. When the number of a body of men is only guessed at upon the view, it is easy for one that is disposed to cavil, to object that the conjecture is mistaken, and that if they were to be counted they would not be found half so many; therefore God would have Israel numbered, that it might be upon record, how vastly they were increased in a little time; that the power of God's providence, and the truth of his promise, may be seen and acknowledged by all. It could not have been expected in any ordinary course of nature, that seventy-five souls (which was the number of Jacob's family, when he went down into Egypt) should in two hundred and fifteen years (and it was no longer) multiply so many hundred thousands. It is therefore to be attributed to an extraordinary virtue in the divine promise and blessing. 2. It was to intimate the particular care God himself would take of his Israel, and expected that Moses and the inferior rulers should take of them. God is called the shepherd of Israel, *Psal. lxxx.* now the shepherds always kept count of their flocks, and delivered them by number to their under-shepherds, that they might know if any were missing; in like manner God numbers his flock, that of all he took into fold he might lose none, but

upon a valuable consideration, even those that were sacrificed to his justice. 3. It was to put a difference between the true-born Israelites, and the mixed multitude that were among them; none were numbered but Israelites; all the world is but lumber in comparison with those jewels. Little account is made of others, but the saints God has a particular property in and concern for: *The Lord knows them that are his*, 2 Tim. ii. 19. *knows them by name*, Phil. iv. 3. The hairs of their head are numbered; but he will say to others, *I never knew you*, never made any account of you. 4. It was in order to their being marshalled into several districts, for the more easy administration of justice, and their more regular march through the wilderness. It is a rout and a rabble, not an army, that is not mustered and put in order.

17. ¶ And Moses and Aaron took these men which are expressed by *their names*. 18. And they assembled all the congregation together on the first day of the second month, and they declared their pedigrees after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of their names, from twenty years old and upward, by their polls. 19. As the LORD commanded Moses, so he numbered them in the wilderness of Sinai. 20. And the children of Reuben, Israel's eldest son, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, by their polls, every male from twenty years old and upwards, all that were able to go forth to war: 21. Those that were numbered of them, *even of the tribe of Reuben, were forty and six thousand, and five hundred*. 22. ¶ Of the children of Simeon, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, those that were numbered of them, according to the number of the names by their polls, every male from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 23. Those that were numbered of them, *even of the tribe of Simeon, were fifty and nine thousand and three hundred*. 24. ¶ Of the children of Gad, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of their names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 25. Those that were numbered of them, *even of the tribe of Gad, were forty and five thousand six hundred and fifty*. 26. ¶ Of the children of Judah, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war: 27. Those that were numbered of them, *even of the tribe of Judah, were threescore and fourteen thousand and six hundred*. 28. ¶ Of the children of Issachar, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war: 29. Those that were numbered of them, *even of the tribe of Issachar, were fifty and four thousand and four hundred*. 30. ¶ Of the children of Zebulun, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war: 31. Those that were numbered of them, *even of the tribe of Zebulun, were fifty and seven thousand and four hundred*. 32. ¶ Of the children of Joseph, *namely*, of the children of Ephraim, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war: 33. Those that were numbered of them, *even of the tribe of Ephraim, were forty thousand and five hundred*. 34. ¶ Of the children of Manasseh, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war: 35. Those that were numbered of them, *even of the tribe of Manasseh, were thirty and two thousand and two hundred*. 36. Of the children of Benjamin, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war: 37. Those that were numbered of them, *even of the tribe of Benjamin, were thirty and five thousand and four hundred*. 38. ¶ Of the children of Dan, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war: 39. Those that were numbered of them, *even of the tribe of Dan, were threescore and two thousand and seven hundred*. 40. ¶ Of the children of Asher, by their generations after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war: 41.

Those that were numbered of them, *even of the tribe of Asher, were forty and one thousand and five hundred*. 42. ¶ Of the children of Naphtali, throughout their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war: 43. Those that were numbered of them, *even of the tribe of Naphtali, were fifty and three thousand and four hundred*.

We have here the speedy execution of the orders given for the numbering of the people. It was begun the same day that the orders were given. *The first day of the second month*, compare ver. 18. with ver. 1. Note, When any work is to be done for God, it is good to set about it quickly, while the sense of duty is strong and pressing. And, for ought appears, it was but one day's work, for many other things were done between this and the twentieth day of this month, when they removed their camp, chap. x. 11. Joab was almost ten months numbering the people in David's time, 2 Sam. xxiv. 8. but then they were dispersed, now they live close together; then Satan moved the doing of it, now God did. It was the sooner and easier done now, because it had been done but a while ago, and they needed but review the old Books, with the alterations since made, which probably they had kept an account of as they occurred.

In the particulars here left upon record, we may observe, 1. That the numbers are registered in words at length (as I may say) and not in figures; to every one of the twelve tribes it is repeated, for the greater ceremony and solemnity of the account, that they were numbered *by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of their names*; to shew, that every tribe took and gave in the account by the same rule, and in the same method, though so many hands were employed in it; setting down their genealogy first, to shew that their family descended from Israel, then the families themselves in the order, then dividing each family into the houses, or subordinate families that branched from it, and under these names of the particular persons, according to the rules of heraldry. Thus every man might know who were his relations or next of kin, or which some laws we have already met with did depend; besides, that the nearer any are to us in relation, the more ready we should be to do them good. 2. That they all end with hundreds, only Gad with fifty, ver. 25. but none of the numbers, descends to units or tens. Some think it was a special providence, that ordered all the tribes just at this time, to be even numbers, and no odd or broken numbers among them, to shew them that there was something more than ordinary designed in their increase, there being this uncommon in the circumstance of it. It is rather probable, that Moses having some time before appointed rulers of hundreds, and rulers of fifties, *Exod. xviii. 25.* they numbered the people by their respective rulers, which would bring the number to even hundreds or fifties. 3. That Judah is the most numerous of them all; more than double to Benjamin and Manasseh, and almost twelve thousand more than any other tribe, ver. 27. It was Judah whom *his brethren must praise*, because from him Messiah the prince was to descend, but because that was a thing at a distance, God did many ways honour that tribe in the mean time, particularly by the great increase of it, for his sake who was to spring out of Judah, *Heb. vii. 14.* in the fulness of time. Judah was to lead the van through the wilderness, and therefore was furnished accordingly with greater strength than any other tribe. 4. Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, are numbered as distinct tribes, and both together made up almost as many as Judah; this was in pursuance of Jacob's adoption of them, by which they were equalled with their uncles Reuben and Simeon, *Gen. xlviii. 5.* And the effect of the blessing of Joseph, who was to be a *fruitful bough*, *Gen. xlix. 22.* And Ephraim the younger is put first, and is more numerous than Manasseh, for Jacob had crossed hands, and foretold ten thousands of Ephraim, and thousands of Manasseh. The fulfilling of this confirms our faith in the spirit of prophecy, with which the patriarchs were endued. 5. When they came down into Egypt, Dan had but one son, *Gen. xli. 23.* and so his tribe but one family, *Numb. xxvi. 42.* Benjamin had then ten sons, *Gen. xlv. 11.* yet now the tribe of Dan is almost double in number to that of Benjamin. Note, The increasing and diminishing of families doth not always go by probabilities. Some are multiplied greatly, and again are diminished, while others that were poor have families made them like a flock, *Psal. cvii. 33, 39, 41.* and see *Job xii. 23.* 6. It is said of each of the tribes, that those were numbered who were able to go forth to war, to mind them that they had wars before them, though now they were in peace and met with no opposition. *Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast as though he had put it off.*

44. These are those that were numbered, which Moses and Aaron numbered, and the princes of Israel, being twelve men: each one was for the house of his fathers. 45. So were all those that were numbered of the children of Israel, by the house of their fathers, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war in Israel: 46. Even all they that were numbered, were six hundred thousand and three thousand, and five hundred and fifty.

We have here the sum total at the foot of the account; they were in all six hundred thousand fighting men, and three thousand five hundred and fifty over. Some think, that when this was their number some months before, *Exod. xxxviii. 26.* the Levites were reckoned with them; but now that tribe was separated for the service of God, yet so many more were by this time attained to the age of twenty years, as that still they were the same number; to shew that whatever we part with for the honour and service of God, it shall certainly be made up to us one way or other.

Now we see what a vast body of men they were. Let us consider, 1. How much went to maintain all these (besides twice as many more, no question, of women and children, sick and aged, and the mixed multitude) for forty years together in the wilderness, and they were all at God's finding every day, having their food from the dew of heaven, and not from the fatness of the earth. O what a great and good housekeeper is our God, that hath such numbers depending on him, and receiving from him every day! 2. What work sin makes with a people; within forty years most of them would indeed have died of course for the common sin of mankind, for when sin entered into the world death came with it, and how great are the desolations which it makes in the earth! But for the particular sin of unbelief and murmuring, all those that were now numbered, except two, laid their bones under their iniquity, and perished in the wilderness. 3. What a great

great multitude God's spiritual Israel will amount to at last, though at one time, and in one place, they seem to be but a little flock, yet when they come all together they shall be a great multitude, innumerable, *Rev. vii. 9.* And though the Church's beginning be small, its latter end shall greatly increase. A little one shall become a thousand.

47. ¶ But the Levites, after the tribe of their fathers, were not numbered among them. 48. For the LORD had spoken unto Moses, saying, 49. Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel: 50. But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof, and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle. 51. And when the tabernacle setteth forward, the Levites shall take it down: and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up: and the stranger that cometh nigh, shall be put to death. 52. And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard throughout their hosts. 53. But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony. 54. And the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did they.

Care is here taken to distinguish the tribe of Levi from the rest of the tribes, which in the matter of the golden calf had distinguished itself. *Exod. xxxii. 26.* Note, Singular services shall be recompensed with singular honours. Now, 1. It was the honour of the Levites that they were made guardians of the spiritualities; to them was committed the care of the tabernacle, and the treasures thereof, both in their camps and in their marches. (1.) When they moved, the Levites were to take down the tabernacle, to carry it and all that belonged to it, and then to set it up again in the place appointed, *ver. 50, 51.* It was for the honour of the holy things, that none should be permitted to see them or touch them, but those only who are called of God to the service. Thus we are all unfit and unworthy to have fellowship with God, till first we are called by his grace into the fellowship of his son Jesus Christ our Lord; and so being the spiritual seed of that great high-priest, are made priests to our God; and it is promised, that God should take Levites to himself, even from the Gentiles, *1st. lxvi. 21.* (2.) When they rested, the Levites were to encamp round about the tabernacle, *ver. 50, 53.* that they might be near their work, and resident upon their charge, always ready to attend; and that they might be a guard upon the tabernacle, to preserve it from being either plundered or profaned. They must pitch round about the tabernacle, *That there be no wrath upon the congregation,* as there would be, if the tabernacle and the charge of it were neglected, or those crowded upon it, that were not allowed to come near. Note Great care must be taken to prevent sin, because the preventing of sin is the preventing of wrath. 2. It was their further honour, that as Israel being a holy people was not reckoned among the nations, so they being a holy tribe were not reckoned among other Israelites, but numbered afterwards by themselves, *ver. 49.* The service which the Levites were to do about the sanctuary, is called a warfare, *Num. iv. 23.* And being engaged in that warfare, they were discharged from military services, and therefore not numbered with those that were to go out to war. Note, They that minister about holy things should neither entangle themselves, nor be entangled in secular affairs. The ministry is itself work enough for a whole man, and all little enough to be employed in it. It is an admonition to ministers, to distinguish themselves, by their exemplary conversation, from common Israelites, nor affecting to see them greater, but aiming to be really better, every way better than others.

C H A P. II.

The thousands of Israel having been mustered in the former chapter, in this are marshalled, and a regular disposition made of their camp, by a divine appointment. Here is, 1. A general order concerning it, ver. 1, 2. 2. Particular directions for the posting of each of the tribes, in four distinct squadrons, three tribes in each squadron. (1.) In the van-guard, on the east, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun were posted, ver. 3—9. (2.) In the right wing, southward, Reuben, Simeon, and Gad, ver. 10—16. (3.) In the rear, westward, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, ver. 18—24. (4.) In the left wing, northward, Dan, Asher, and Naphtali, ver. 25—31. (5.) The tabernacle in the center, ver. 17. And lastly, The conclusion of this appointment, ver. 32—34.

1. **A**ND the LORD spake unto Moses, and unto Aaron, saying, 2. Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house: far off, about the tabernacle of the congregation shall they pitch.

Here is the general appointment, given both for their orderly encampment where they rested, and their orderly march when they moved. Some order, it is likely they had observed hitherto; they came out of Egypt in rank and file, *Exod. xiii. 18.* but now they were put into a better model. 1. They all dwelt in tents, and when they marched, carried all their tents along with them, for they found no city to dwell in, *Psalm. cvii. 4.* This represents to us our state in this world, it is a moveable state, we are here to day and gone to-morrow, and it is a military state: Is not our life a warfare? We do but pitch our tents in this world and have in it no continuing city. Let us therefore while we are pitching in this world, be pressing through it. 2. Those of a tribe were to pitch together, every man by his own standard. Note, It is the will of God that mutual love and affection, converse and communion, should be kept up among relations. Those that are of kin to each other, should as much as they can be acquainted with each other; and

the bonds of nature should be improved for the strengthening of the bonds of Christian communion. 3. Every one must know his place, and keep in it; they were not allowed to fix where they pleased, nor to remove when they pleased, but God quarters them, with a charge to abide in their quarters. Note, It is God that appoints us the bounds of our habitation, and to him we must refer ourselves. *He shall choose our inheritance for us, Psalm. xlvii. 4.* and in his choice we must acquiesce, and not to love to sit, nor be as the bird that wanders from her nest. 4. Every tribe had its standard, flag, or ensign, and in should seem every family had some particular ensign of their father's house, which was carried, as with us the colours of each troop or company in a regiment are. These were of use for the distinction of tribes and families, and the gathering and keeping of them together, in allusion to with the preaching of the gospel is said to lift up an ensign, to which the Gentiles shall seek, and by which they shall pitch, *1st. xi. 10, 12.* Note, God is the God of order, and not of confusion. These standards made this mighty army seem more beautiful to its friends, and more formidable to its enemies. The Church of Christ is said to be as terrible as an army with banners, *Cant. vi. 10.* It is uncertain how these standards were distinguished: some conjecture that the standard of each tribe was of the same colour with the precious stone, in which the name of that tribe was written in the high-priest's ephod, and that was all the difference. Many of the modern Jews think, there was some coat of arms painted in each stand, which had reference to the blessing of that tribe by Jacob. Judah bore a lion, Dan a serpent, Naphtali a hind, Benjamin a wolf, &c. Some of them say, the four principal standards were Judah a lion, Reuben a man, Joseph an ox, and Dan an eagle; making the appearances in Ezekiel's vision to allude to it. Others say, the name of each tribe was written in its standard; whatever it was, no doubt it gave a certain direction. 5. They were to pitch about the tabernacle, which was to be in the midst of them, as the tent or pavilion of a general in the center of an army. They must encamp round the tabernacle, (1.) That it might be equally a comfort and joy to them all, as it was a token of God's gracious presence with them, *Psalm. xlvii. 5.* God is in the midst of her she shall not be moved. Their camp had reason to be hearty, when thus they had God in the heart of them; to have bread from heaven every day round about their camp, and fire from heaven, with others tokens of God's favour in the midst of their camp, were abundantly sufficient to answer that question, *Is the Lord among us, or is he not? Happy art thou, O Israel!* It is probable, the doors of all their tents were made to look towards the tabernacle from all sides; for every Israelite should have his eyes always towards the Lord; therefore they worshipped at the tent door. The tabernacle was in the midst of the camp, that it might be near to them; for it is a very desirable thing to have the solemn administrations of holy ordinances near us and within our reach. *The kingdom of God is among you.* (2.) That they might be a guard and defence upon the tabernacle and the Levites on every side. No invader could come near God's tabernacle, but he must first penetrate the thickest of their squadrons. Note, If God undertake the protection of our comforts, we ought in our place to undertake the protection of his institutions, and stand up in defence of his honour and interest and ministers. 9. Yet they were to pitch afar off, in reverence to the sanctuary, that it might not seem crowded, and thrust up among them; and that the common business of the camp might be no annoyance to it. They were also taught to keep their distance, lest too much familiarity should breed contempt. It is supposed from *Joshua iii. 5.* that the difference between the nearest part of the camp and the tabernacle, (or perhaps between them and the camp of the Levites, who pitched near the tabernacle) was two thousand cubits, that is, a thousand yards, little more than half a measured mile with us; but the outward parts of the camp must needs be much farther off. Some compute that the extent of their camp would be no less than twelve miles square: for it was like a moveable city, with streets and lanes, in which perhaps the manna fell, as well as on the outside of the camp, that they might have it at the doors. In the Christian Church we read of a throne, (as in the tabernacle there was a mercy-seat) which is called a glorious high throne from the beginning, *Jer. xvii. 12.* And that throne surrounded by spiritual Israelites, twenty-four elders, double to the number of the tribes, clothed in white raiment, *Rev. iv. 4.* and the banner over them is Love; but we are not ordered, as they were, to pitch afar off; no, we are invited to draw near, and come boldly. The saints of the Most High are said to be round about him, *Psalm. lxxvi. 12.* God by his grace keeps us close to him.

3. ¶ And on the east side toward the rising of the sun, shall they of the standard of the camp of Judah pitch, throughout their armies: and Nahshon the son of Amminadab shall be captain of the children of Judah. 4. And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were threescore and fourteen thousand and six hundred. 5. And those that pitch next unto him, shall be the tribe of Issachar: and Nethaneel the son of Zuar shall be captain of the children of Issachar. 6. And his host, and those that were numbered thereof were fifty and four thousand and four hundred. 7. Then the tribe of Zebulun: and Eliab the son of Helon shall be captain of the children of Zebulun. 8. And his host, and those that were numbered thereof, were fifty and seven thousand and four hundred. 9. All that were numbered in the camp of Judah were an hundred thousand and fourscore thousand and six thousand and four hundred, throughout their armies: These shall first set forth. 10. ¶ On the south side shall be the standard of the camp of Reuben, according to their armies: and the captain of the children of Reuben shall be Elizur the son of Shedeur. 11. And his host, and those that were numbered thereof, were forty and six thousand and five hundred. 12. And those which pitch by him, shall be the tribe of Simeon: and the captain of the children of Simeon shall be Shellumiel the son of Zurishaddai. 13. And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were fifty and nine thousand and three hundred. 14. Then the tribe of Gad: and the captain of the sons of Gad shall be Eliasaph the son of Reuel. 15. And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were forty and five thousand

land and six hundred and fifty. 16. All that were numbered in the camp of Reuben, *were* an hundred thousand and fifty and one thousand and four hundred and fifty, throughout their armies; and they shall set forth in the second rank. 17. ¶ Then the tabernacle of the congregation shall set forward with the camp of the Levites, in the midst of the camp: as they encamp so shall they set forward; every man in his place by their standards. 18. ¶ On the west side *shall be* the standard of the camp of Ephraim, according to their armies: and the captain of the sons of Ephraim, *shall be* Elishama the son of Ammihud. 19. And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* forty thousand and five hundred. 20. And by him *shall be* the tribe of Manasseh: and the captain of the children of Manasseh *shall be* Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur. 21. And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* thirty and two thousand and two hundred. 22. Then the tribe of Benjamin: and the captain of the sons of Benjamin, *shall be* Abidan the son of Gideon. 23. And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* thirty and five thousand and four hundred. 24. All that were numbered of the camp of Ephraim, *were* an hundred thousand and eight thousand and an hundred, throughout their armies: and they shall go forward in the third rank. 25. ¶ The standard of the camp of Dan *shall be* on the north side by their armies: and the captain of the children of Dan, *shall be* Ahiezer the son of Ammihaddai. 26. And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* three score and two thousand and seven hundred. 27. And those that encamp by him, *shall be* the tribe of Asher: and the captain of the children of Asher, *shall be* Pagiel the son of Ocran. 28. And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* forty and one thousand and five hundred. 29. ¶ Then the tribe of Naphtali: and the captain of the children of Naphtali, *shall be* Ahira the son of Enan. 30. And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* fifty and three thousand and four hundred. 31. All they that were numbered in the camp of Dan, *were* an hundred thousand and fifty and seven thousand and six hundred: they shall go hindmost with their standard. 32. ¶ These *are* those which were numbered of the children of Israel, by the house of their fathers: all those that were numbered of the camps throughout their hosts, *were* six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty. 33. But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel; as the LORD commanded Moses. 34. And the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses: so they pitched by their standards, and so they set forward, every one after their families, according to the house of their fathers.

We have here the particular distribution of the twelve tribes into four squadrons, three tribes into a squadron, one of which was to lead the other two.

Observe, 1. God himself appointed them their place, to prevent strife and envy among them. Had they been left to determine precedence among themselves, they would have been in danger of quarrelling with one another, as the disciples, who strove *which should be greatest*, each would have had a pretence to be first, or at least not to be last. Had it been left to Moses to determine, they would have quarrelled with him, and charged him with partiality; therefore God doth it, who is himself the fountain and judge of honour, and in his appointment all must acquiesce. If God in his providence advance others above us, and abase us, we ought to be as well satisfied in his doing it that way, as if he did it, as this was done here, by a voice out of the tabernacle; and this consideration, that it appears to be the will of God it should be so, should effectually silence all envies and discontents. And as far as our place comes to be our choice, our Saviour has given us a rule, *Luke xiv. 8. Sit not down in the highest room; and another, Matth. xx. 27. He that will be chief let him be your servant.* Those that are most humble and most serviceable, are really most honourable. 2. Every tribe had a captain, a prince, or commander in chief, whom God himself nominated, the same that had been appointed to number them, *chap. i. 5.* Our being all the children of one Adam, is so far from justifying the levellers, and taking away the distinctions of place and honour, that even among the children of the same Abraham, the same Jacob, the same Judah, God himself, appointed that one should be captain of all the rest. There are *powers ordained of God*, and those to whom honour and fear is due, and must be paid. Some observe the significancy of the names of these princes, at least in general how much God was in the thoughts of those that gave them their names, for most of them have *El*, God; at one end or other of their name. Ne-thaneel, the gift of God; Eliab, my God a Father. Elizar, my God a rock; Shelumiel, God my peace; Eliafaph, God has added; Elishama, my God hath heard; Gamaliel, God my reward; Pagiel, God has met me. By which it appeared that the Israelites in Egypt did not quite forget the name of their God, but when they wanted other memorials, preserved the remembrance of it in the names of their children, and therewith comforted themselves in their affliction.

3. Those tribes were placed together under the same standard that were nearest of kin to each other; Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, were the three youngest sons of Leah, and they were put together; and Issachar and Zebulun would not grudge to be under Judah, since they were his younger brethren; Reuben and Simeon would not have been content in their place. Therefore Reuben, Jacob's eldest son, is made chief of the next squadron, No. XXI.*

Simeon no doubt is willing to be under him, and Gad the son of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid, is fitly added to them in Levi's room: Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin are all and only the posterity of Rachel. Dan, the eldest son of Bilhah, is made a leading tribe, though the son of a concubine, that more abundant honour might be bestowed on that which lacked; and it was said that Dan shall judge his people, and to him were added the two younger sons of the handmaids. Thus exceptionable was the order in which they were placed. 4. The tribe of Judah was in the first post of honour, encamped towards the rising of the sun, and in their marches led the van, not only because it was the most numerous tribe, but chiefly because from that tribe Christ was to come, who is the *lion of the tribe of Judah*, and was to descend from the loins of him who was now nominated chief captain of that tribe. Nahshon is reckoned among the ancestors of Christ, *Matth. i.* So that when he went before them, Christ himself went before them in effect, as their leader. Judah was the first of the twelve sons of Jacob that was blessed; Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, were censured by their dying Father: he therefore being first in blessing, though not in birth is put first, to teach children how to value the smiles of their godly parents, and dread their frowns. 5. The tribe of Levi pitched close about the tabernacle, within the rest of their tribes, *ver. 17.* They must defend the sanctuary, and then the rest of the tribes must defend them. Thus in the vision John saw of the glory of heaven, between the elders and the throne were four living creatures full of eyes, *Rev. iv. 6—10.* Civil powers should protect the religious interests of the nation, and be a defence upon that glory.

6. The camp of Dan, (and so that tribe is called long after their settlement in Canaan, *Judg. xiii. 25.* because celebrated for their military prowess) though posted in the left wing when they encamped, was ordered in their march to bring up the rear, *ver. 31.* They were the most numerous next to Judah, and therefore were ordered into a post, which next to the front required most strength, for as the strength is, so shall the day be. Lastly, The children of Israel observed the orders given them, and did as the Lord commanded Moses, *ver. 34.* They put themselves in the post assigned them, without murmuring or disputing, and as it was their safety, so it was their beauty: Balaam was charmed with the sight of it, *Numb. xxiv. 5.* How gloriously *are thy tents, O Jacob?* Thus the gospel Church, called the camp of saints, ought to be compact together according to the scripture model, every one knowing and keeping his place, and then all that with well to the Church rejoice, *beholding their order, Col. ii. 5.*

C H A P. III.

This chapter and the next are concerning the tribe of Levi, which was to be mustered and marshalled by itself, and not in common with the other tribes: which signified the particular honour put upon them, and the particular duty and service required from them. The Levites are in this chapter considered, 1. As attendants on and assistants to the priest in the temple service. And so we have an account, (1.) Of the priests themselves, *ver. 1—4* and their work, *ver. 10.* (2.) Of the gifts of the Levites to them, *ver. 1—9.* In order to which they are mustered, *ver. 14—16.* and the sum of them taken, *ver. 39.* Each particular family of them is mustered, has its place assigned, and its charge. The Gershonites, *ver. 18—26.* The Kohathites, *ver. 27—32.* The Merarites, *ver. 33—39.* 2. As equivalents for the first-born, *ver. 11—13.* (1.) The first-born were numbered, and the Levites taken instead of them, as far as the number of the Levites went, *ver. 40—45.* (2.) What first born there were more than the Levites, were redeemed, *ver. 46—51.*

1. THESE also are the generations of Aaron and Moses, in the day that the LORD spake with Moses in mount Sinai. 2. And these are the names of the sons of Aaron; Nadab the first-born, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 3. These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the priests which were anointed, whom he consecrated to minister in the priest's office. 4. And Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD, when they offered strange fire before the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children: and Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office, in the sight of Aaron their father. 5. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 6. Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. 7. And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation, before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle. 8. And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle. 9. And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron, and to his sons; they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel. 10. And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. 11. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 12. And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel, instead of all the first-born that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine. 13. Because all the first-born are mine: for on the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, I hallowed unto me all the first-born in Israel, both man and beast, mine they shall be: I am the LORD.

Here, 1. The family of Aaron is confirmed in the priest's offices, *ver. 10.* They had been called to it before, and consecrated; here they are appointed to wait on their priest's office: the apostle useth this phrase, *Rom. xii. 7. Let us wait on our ministry.* The work and office of the ministry require a constant attendance and great diligence: so frequent are the returns of its work, and yet so transient its favourable opportunities, that it must be

waited on. Here is repeated what was said before, *chap. i. 51. The stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death*; which forbids invading of the priest's office by any other person whatsoever, none must come nigh to minister but Aaron and his sons only, all others are strangers. It also lays a charge upon the priests as door keepers in God's house, to take care that none should come near who were forbidden by the law; they must keep off all intruders, whose approach would be to the profanation of the holy things, telling them that if they came near it was at their peril, they would *die by the hand of God*, as Uzza did. The Jews say, that afterwards there was hung over the door of the temple a golden sword, (perhaps alluding to that flaming sword at the entrance of the garden of Eden) on which was engraven, *The stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death*. 2. A particular account is given of this family of Aaron, what we have met with before concerning them is here repeated. (1.) The consecrations of all the sons of Aaron, *ver. 3.* They were all anointed to minister before the Lord, though it appeared afterwards and God knew it, that two of them were wife, and two were foolish. (2.) The fall of the two eldest, *ver. 4.* they offered strange fire, and died for so doing before the Lord. This is mentioned here in the preamble to the law concerning the priesthood, for warning to all succeeding priests; let them know by this example, that God is a jealous God, and will not be mocked; the holy anointing oil was an honour to the obedient, but not a shelter to the disobedient. It is here said, *they had no children*, providence so ordering it, for their greater punishment, that none of their descendants should remain to be priests, and so to bear up their name, who had profaned God's name. 3. The continuance of the two younger, Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the sight of Aaron. It intimates, 1. The care they took about their ministrations, not to make any blunders; they kept under their father's eye, and took instruction from him in all they did, because probably Nadab and Abihu got out of their father's sight when they offered strange fire. Note, It is good for young people to be under the conduct and inspection of those that are aged and experienced. 2. The comfort Aaron took in it: it pleased him to see his younger sons behave themselves prudently and gravely, when his two elder had miscarried. Note, It is great satisfaction to parents to see their children walk in the truth, 3 *Joh. ver. 4.* 3. A grant is made to the Levites to be assistants to the priests in their work. Give the Levites to Aaron, *ver. 9.* Aaron was to have a greater propriety in and power over the tribe of Levi, than any other of the princes, had in and over their respective tribes. There was a great deal of work belonging to the priests' office, and there was now only three pair of hands to do it all, Aaron and his two sons, for it does not appear that they had either of them any children at this time, at least not any that were of age to minister, therefore God appoints the Levites to attend upon them. Note, Those whom God finds work for, he will find help for.

Here is, (1.) The service for which the Levites were designed, they were to minister to the priests in their ministrations to the Lord, *ver. 6.* and to keep Aaron's charge, *ver. 7.* as the deacons to the bishops in the evangelical constitutions, serving at tables while they waited on their ministry. The Levites killed the sacrifices, and then the priests needed only to sprinkle the blood and burn the fat: the Levites prepared the incense, the priests burnt it, 1 *Chron. ix. 26.* They were to keep not only Aaron's charge, but the charge of the whole congregation. Note, It is a great trust that is reposed in ministers, not only for the glory of Christ, but for the good of his Church; to that they must not only keep the charge of the great high-priest, but must also be faithful to the souls of men, a trust for whom a dispensation is committed to them. (2.) The consideration upon which the Levites were demanded, they were taken instead of the first-born. The preservation of the first-born of Israel, when all the first-born of the Egyptians (with whom there were many of them mingled) were destroyed, was looked upon by him who never makes any unreasonable demands, as cause sufficient for the appropriating of all the first-born from thence-forward to himself, *ver. 13. All the first-born are mine.* That was sufficient to make them his, though he had given no reason for it, for he is the sole fountain and lord of all beings and powers; but because all obedience must flow from love, and acts of duty must be acts of gratitude, before they were challenged into peculiar services, they were crowned with peculiar favours. Note, When he that made us saves us, we are thereby laid under further obligations to serve him and live to him. God's right to us by redemption corroborates the right he has to us by creation.

Now because the first born of a family are generally the favourites, and some would think it a disparagement to have their eldest sons servants to the priests, and attending before the door of the tabernacle, God took the tribe of Levi entire for his own, in lieu of the first born, *ver. 12.* Note, God's institutions put no hardships upon men in any of their just interests; or reasonable affections. It was presumed that the Israelites would rather part with the Levites than with the first-born, and therefore God graciously ordered the exchange; yet for us he spared not his own son.

14. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying, 15. Number the children of Levi, after the house of their fathers, by their families: every male, from a month old and upward, shalt thou number them. 16. And Moses numbered them according to the word of the LORD, as he was commanded, 17. And these were the sons of Levi, by their names: Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari. 18. And these are the names of the sons of Gershon, by their families: Libni and Shimei. 19. And the sons of Kohath by their families: Amram, and Izebar, Hebron, and Uzziel. 20. And the sons of Merari by their families: Mahli, and Mushi: these are the families of the Levites, according to the house of their fathers. 21. Of Gershon was the family of the Libnites, and the family of the Shimites: these are the families of the Gershonites. 22. Those that were numbered of them, according to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, even those that were numbered of them, were seven thousand and five hundred. 23. The families of the Gershonites shall pitch behind the tabernacle westward. 24. And the chief of the house of the father of the Gershonites, shall be Elizaphan the son of Lael. 25. And the charge of the sons of Gershon, in the tabernacle of the congregation, shall be the tabernacle, and the tent, the covering thereof, and the hanging for the door of

the tabernacle of the congregation: 26. And the hangings of the court, and the curtain for the door of the court, which is by the tabernacle, and by the altar round about, and the cords of it, for all the service thereof. 27. ¶ And of Kohath was the family of the Amramites, and the family of the Izebarites, and the family of the Hebronites, and the family of the Uzzielites: these are the families of the Kohathites. 28. In the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, were eight thousand and six hundred, keeping the charge of the sanctuary. 29. The families of the sons of Kohath shall pitch on the sides of the tabernacle southward. 30. And the chief of the house of the father of the families of the Kohathites, shall be Elizaphan the son of Uzziel. 31. And the charge shall be the ark, and the table and the candlestick, and the altars and the vessels of the sanctuary, wherewith they minister, and the hanging, and all the service thereof. 32. And Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, shall be chief over the chief of the Levites, and have the oversight of them that keep the charge of the sanctuary. 33. ¶ Of Merari was the family of the Mahlites, and the family of the Mushtites: these are the families of Merari. 34. And those that were numbered of them, according to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, were six thousand and two hundred. 35. And the chief of the house of the father of the families of Merari, was Zuriel, the son of Abihail: these shall pitch on the side of the tabernacle, northward. 36. And under the custody and charge of the sons of Merari shall be the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and the sockets thereof, and all the vessels thereof, and all that serveth thereto. 37. And the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords, 38. ¶ But those that encamp before the tabernacle toward the east, even before the tabernacle of the congregation eastward, shall be Moses and Aaron, and his sons, keeping the charge of the sanctuary, for the charge of the children of Israel: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. 39. All that were numbered of the Levites, which Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of the LORD, throughout their families, all the males from a month old and upward, were twenty and two thousand.

The Levites being granted to Aaron to minister to him, they are here delivered him by tale, that he might know what he had, and employ them accordingly.

Observe, 1. By what rule they were numbered, *Every male from a month old and upward*, *ver. 15.* The rest of the tribes were numbered only from twenty years old and upward, and of them those only that were able to go forth to war; but into the number of the Levites they must take in both infants and infirm; being exempted from the war, it was not insisted upon that they should be of age and strength for the wars. Though it appears afterwards that a little more than a third part of the Levites were fit to be employed in the service of the tabernacle (about eight thousand out of twenty-two) *chap. iv. 47, 48.* Yet God would have them all numbered as retainers to his family; that none may think themselves disowned and rejected of God, because they are not in a capacity of doing him that service which they see others do him. The Levites of a month old could not honour God and serve the tabernacle, as those that were grown up; yet out of the mouth of these babes and sucklings, the Levites' praise was perfected. Let not little children be hindered from being enrolled among the disciples of Christ, for such was the tribe of Levi, of such is the kingdom of heaven, that kingdom of priests. The redemption of the first-born was reckoned from a month old, *Numb. xvi. 15, 16.* Therefore from that age the Levites were numbered. They were numbered after the house of their fathers, not their mothers; for if the daughter of a Levite married one of another tribe her son was not a Levite; but we read of a spiritual priest to our God, who inherited the unfeigned faith which dwelt in his mother and grand-mother, 2 *Tim. i. 5.* 2. How they were distributed into three classes, according to the number of the sons of Levi, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, and these subdivided into several families, *ver. 17. to ver. 20.* Concerning each of these three classes we have an account; 1. Of their number. The Gershonites were seven thousand five hundred. The Kohathites were eight thousand six hundred. The Merarites were six thousand two hundred. The rest of the tribes had not their subordinate families numbered by themselves as those of Levi; this honour God put upon his own tribe. 2. Of their post about the tabernacle on which they were to attend. The Gershonites pitched behind the tabernacle, westward, *ver. 23.* The Kohathites on the right hand, southward, *ver. 29.* The Merarites on the left-hand, northward, *ver. 35.* And to complete the square, Moses and Aaron with the priests, encamped in the front, eastward, *ver. 36.* Thus was the tabernacle surrounded with its guards; and thus doth the angel of the Lord encamp round about them that fear him, those living temples, *Psal. xxxiv. 7.* Every one knew his place, and must therein abide with God. 3. Of their chief or head. As each class had its own place, so each had its own prince. The commander of the Gershonites was Elizaphan, *ver. 24.* Of the Kohathites, Elizaphan, *ver. 30.* Of whom we read, *Lev. x. 4.* that he was one of the bearers at the funeral of Nadab and Abihu. Of the Merarites, Zuriel, *ver. 35.* 4. Of their charge, when the camp moved. Each class knew their own business: it was requisite they should; for that which is every body's work often proves no body's work. The Gershonites were charged with the custody and carriage of all the curtains and hangings, and coverings of the tabernacle and court, *ver. 25, 26.* The Kohathites of all the furniture of the tabernacle; the ark, altar, table, &c. *ver. 31, 32.* The Merarites of the heavy carriage, boards, bars, pillars, &c. *ver. 36, 37.* Here we may observe, (1.) That the Kohathites, though they were

the second house, yet were preferred before the elder family of the Gershonites. Besides, that Aaron and the priests were of that family, they were more numerous, and their post and charge more honourable, which probably was ordered to put an honour upon Moses who was of that family. Yet (2.) The posterity of Moses were not at all dignified or privileged, but stood upon the level with other Levites, that it might appear he did not seek the advancement of his own family, nor to entail any honours upon it either in church or state; he that had honour enough himself coveted not to have his name shine by that borrowed light, but rather to have the Levites borrow honour from his name. Let none think contemptibly of the Levites, though inferior to the priests, for Moses himself thought it preferment enough for his sons to be Levites. Probably, it was because the family of Moses were Levites only, that in the title of this chapter, which is concerning that tribe, ver. 1. Aaron is put before Moses. (3.) The sum total of the numbers of this tribe. They are computed in all twenty-two thousand, ver. 39. The sums of the particular families amount to three hundred more; which if it had been added to the sum total, the Levites instead of being two hundred seventy-three, fewer than the first-born, as they were, ver. 43. would have been twenty-seven more, and so the balance would have fallen the other way; and it is supposed that the three hundred which was struck off from the account when the exchange was to be made were the first-born of the Levites themselves, born since their coming out of Egypt; which could not be put into the exchange because they were already sanctified to God. But that which is especially observable here is, that the tribe of Levi was by much the least of all the tribes. Note, God's part in the world is too often the smallest part. His chosen are but a little flock in comparison.

40. ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Number all the first-born of the males of the children of Israel, from a month old and upward, and take the number of their names. 41. And thou shalt take the Levites for me (I am the LORD) instead of all the first-born among the children of Israel: and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstlings among the cattle of the children of Israel. 42. And Moses numbered as the Lord commanded him, all the first born among the children of Israel. 43. And all the first-born males by the number of names, from a month old and upward, of those that were numbered of them, were twenty and two thousand two hundred and three score and thirteen. 44. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 45. Take the Levites instead of all the first-born among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle, and the Levites shall be mine: I am the LORD. 46. And for those that are to be redeemed of the two hundred and threescore and thirteen of the first-born of the children of Israel, which are more than the Levites; 47. Thou shalt even take five shekels apiece by the poll, after the shekel of the sanctuary shalt thou take them; the shekel is twenty gerahs. 48. And thou shalt give the money wherewith the odd number of them is to be redeemed, unto Aaron and to his sons. 49. And Moses took the redemption money of them that were over and above them that were redeemed by the Levites. 50. Of the first-born of the children of Israel took he the money; a thousand three hundred and threescore and five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary. 51. And Moses gave the money of them that were redeemed unto Aaron and to his sons, according to the word of the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses.

Here is the exchange made of the Levites for the first-born. 1. The first-born were numbered from a month old, ver. 42, 43. Those certainly were not reckoned who, though first-born were become heads of families themselves, but those only that were under age: and the learned Bishop Patrick is clearly of opinion, that none were numbered but those only that were born since their coming out of Egypt, when the first born were sanctified, Exod. xii. If there were two and twenty thousand first-born males, we may suppose as many females, and all these brought forth in the first year after they came out of Egypt; we must infer from hence that in the last year of their servitude, even then when it was in the greatest extremity, there were abundance of marriages made among the Israelites; they were not discouraged by the present distress, but married in faith, expecting that God would shortly visit them with mercy, and their children, though born in bondage, should live in liberty and honour. And it was a token for good to them, an evidence that they were blessed of the Lord, that they were not only kept alive, but greatly increased in a barren wilderness. 2. The number of the first-born, and that of the Levites, by a special providence, came pretty near to each other; thus when he divided the nations, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel, Deut. xxxii. 8. Known unto God are all his works beforehand, and there is an exact proportion between them, and so it will appear when they come to be compared. The Levites cattle are said to be taken instead of the cattle of the first-born, i. e. the Levites with all their possessions were devoted to God instead of the first-born and all theirs; for when we give ourselves to God, all we have passed as appurtenances with the premises. 3. The small number of first-born which exceeded the number of the Levites (two hundred seventy three in all) were to be redeemed, at five shekels apiece, and the redemption money given to Aaron; for it would not do well to have them added to the Levites. It is probable, in the exchange they began with the eldest of the first-born, and so downwards, so that those were to be redeemed with money, who were the two hundred seventy three youngest of the first-born; more likely so, than either that it was determined by lot, or that the money was paid out of the public stock. The Church is called the Church of the first-born, which is redeemed, not as they were with silver and gold, but being devoted by sin to the justice of God, is ransomed with the precious blood of the Son of God.

C H A P. IV.

In the former chapter an account was taken of the whole tribe of Levi, in this of those of that tribe that were in the prime of their time for service, betwixt thirty and fifty years old. 1. The serviceable men of the Kohathites are ordered to be numbered, and their charges given them, ver. 3—20. 2. Of the Gershonites, ver. 24—28. 3. Of the Merarites, ver. 29—33. 4. The numbers of each and the sum total at last are recorded, ver. 34—49.

1. AND the LORD spake unto Moses, and unto Aaron, saying, 2. Take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, after their families, by the house of their fathers; 3. From thirty years old and upward, even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation. 4. This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, about the most holy things, 5. ¶ And when the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come and his sons, and they shall take down the covering vail, and cover the ark of the testimony with it: 6. And shall put thereon the covering of badgers' skins, and shall spread over it a cloth wholly of blue, and shall put in the staves thereof. 7. And upon the table of shew-bread they shall spread a cloth of blue, and put thereon the dishes and the spoons and the bowls, and covers to cover withal: and the continual bread shall be thereon. 8. And they shall spread upon them a cloth of scarlet, and cover the same with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put in the staves thereof. 9. And they shall take a cloth of blue, and cover the candlestick of the light, and his lamps, and his tongs, and his snuff-dishes, and all the oil vessels thereof, wherewith they minister unto it. 10. And they shall put it and all the vessels thereof within a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put it upon a bar. 11. And upon the golden altar they shall spread a cloth of blue, and cover it with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put to the staves thereof. 12. And they shall take all the instruments of ministry, wherewith they minister in the sanctuary, and put them in a cloth of blue, and cover them with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put them on a bar. 13. And they shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth thereon: 14. And they shall put upon it all the vessels thereof, wherewith they minister about it, even the censers, the flesh-hooks, and the shovels, and the basons, all the vessels of the altar; and they shall spread upon it a covering of badgers' skins, and put to the staves of it. 15. And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath, in the tabernacle of the congregation. 16. ¶ And to the office of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, pertaineth the oil for the light, and the sweet incense and the daily meat-offering, and the anointing oil, and the oversight of all the tabernacle, and of all that therein is, in the sanctuary, and in the vessels thereof. 17. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, and unto Aaron, saying, 18. Cut ye not off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites, from among the Levites. 19. But thus do unto them, that they may live and not die, when they approach unto the most holy things; Aaron and his sons shall go in, and appoint them every one to his service, and to his burden. 20. But they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die.

We have here a second muster of the tribe of Levi. As that tribe was taken out of all Israel to be God's peculiar, so the middle aged men of that tribe were taken from among the rest, to be actually employed in the service of the tabernacle. Now observe, 1. Who were to be taken into this number. All the males from thirty years old to fifty. Of the other tribes, those that were numbered to go forth to war, were from twenty years old and upward, but of the Levites, only from thirty to fifty; for the service of God require the best of our strength, and the prime of our time, which cannot be better spent than to the honour of him who is the first and best. And a man may make a good soldier much sooner than a good minister.

Now, 1. They were not to be employed till they were thirty years old, because till then they were in danger of retaining something childish and youthful, and had not gravity enough to do the service, and wear the honour of a Levite. At twenty five years old they were entered as probationers, Numb. viii. 24. and in David's time, when there was more work to be done, at twenty, 1 Chron. xxiii. 24. and so Ezra iii. 8. but they must be five years learning, and waiting, and so fitting themselves for service; nay, in David's time, they were ten years in preparation, from twenty to thirty. John the Baptist began his public ministry, and Christ his, at thirty years old; it is not in the letter of it obliging to gospel ministers now, as if they must either not begin their work till thirty years old, or must leave it

it off at fifty; but it gives us two good rules, (1.) That ministers must not be novices, 1 Tim. iii. 6. It is a work that requires ripeness of judgment, and great stayedness, and therefore those are very unfit for it, who are yet but babes in knowledge, and have not put away childish things. (2.) That they must learn before they teach, serve before they rule, and must first be proved, 1 Tim. iii. 10. 2. They were discharged at fifty years old, from the toilsome part of the service, particularly this of carrying the tabernacle; for that is the special service for which they are here ordained, and which there was most occasion for while they were in the wilderness. When they began to enter upon old age they were dismissed. (1.) In favour to them that they might not be over-toiled, when their strength began to decay. Twenty years good service was thought pretty well for one man. (2.) In honour to the work, that it might not be done by those, who through the infirmities of age were slow and heavy. The service of God should be done when we are in the most lively active frame. Those do not consider this, who put off their repentance to old age; and so leave the best work to be done in the worst time. 2. How their work is described. They are said to enter into the host, or warfare, to do the work in the tabernacle. The ministry is, (1.) A good work, 1 Tim. iii. 1. Ministers are not ordained to the honour only, but to the labour, not to have the wages, but to do the work. (2.) A good warfare, 1 Tim. i. 18. They that enter into the ministry must look upon themselves as entered into the host, and approve themselves good soldiers, 2 Tim. ii. 5.

Now as to the sons of Kohath in particular, here is, 1. Their service appointed them in the removes of the tabernacle. Afterwards when the tabernacle was fixed, they had other work assigned them; but this was the work of the day which was to be done in its day. Observe, Wherever the camp of Israel went, the tabernacle of the Lord went with them, and care must be taken for the carriage of it. Note, Wherever we go, we must see to it, that we take our religion along with us, and not forget that or any part of it. Now the Kohathites were to carry all the holy things of the tabernacle. They were charged with those things before, chap. iii. 31. but here they have more particular instructions given them. (1.) Aaron and his sons the priests must pack up the things which the Kohathites were to carry, as here directed, ver. 5, &c. God had before appointed that none should come into the most holy place, but only Aaron once a year with a cloud of incense, Lev. xvi. 2. and yet the necessity of their unsettled state requiring it, that law is here dispensed with; for every time they removed, Aaron and his sons went in to take down the ark, and make it up for carriage; for (as the learned Bishop Patrick suggests) the *Shechinah*, or display of the divine Majesty, which was over the mercy-seat, removed for the present in the pillar of cloud which was taken up, and then the ark was not dangerous to be approached. 2. All the holy things must be covered; the ark and table with three coverings, all the rest with two. Even the ashes of the altar, in which the holy fire was carefully preserved and raked up, must have a purple cloth spread over them, ver. 13. Even the brazen altar, though in the court of the sanctuary it stood open to the view of all, yet was covered in the carriage of it. All these coverings are designed, 1. For safety, that these holy things might not be rustled with the wind, sullied with the rain, or tarnished with the sun, but they might be preserved in their beauty; for on all the glory shall be a defence. The coverings of badgers skins being thick and strong would keep out wet; and while we are in our passage through the wilderness of this world, it concerns us to be fenced for all weathers, Isa. iv. 5, 6. 2. For decency and ornament. Most of these things had a cloth of blue, or purple, or scarlet, spread outmost; and the ark was covered with a cloth wholly of blue, ver. 6. An emblem (say some) of the azure skies, which are spread like a curtain, between us and the Majesty on high, Job xxvi. 9. Those that are faithful to God should endeavour likewise to appear beautiful before men, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. 3. For concealment. It signified the darkness of that dispensation. That which is now brought to light by the gospel, and revealed to babes, was then hid from the wise and prudent. They saw only the coverings, not the holy things themselves, Heb. x. 1. but now Christ has destroyed the face of the covering, Isa. xxv. 7. (3.) When all the holy things were covered, then the Kohathites were to carry them on their shoulders. Those things, that had slaves were carried by their slaves, ver. 6, 8, 11, 14. those that had not, were carried upon a bar, or bier, or bearing barrow, ver. 10—12. See how the tokens of God's presence in this world are moveable things, but we look for a kingdom that cannot be moved. 2. Eleazar, now the eldest son of Aaron, is appointed overseer of the Kohathites in this service, ver. 16. he must take care that nothing was forgot, left behind or displaced. As a priest he had more honour than the Levites, but then he had more care; and that care was a heavier burden, no doubt, upon his heart, than all the burdens that were laid upon their shoulders. It is much easier to do the work of the tabernacle than to discharge the trusts of it, to obey than to rule. 3. Great care must be taken to preserve the lives of these Levites, by preventing their unseasonable irreverent approach to the most holy things, ver. 18. *Cut ye not off the Kohathites.* Note, Those that do not what they can to keep others from sin, do what they can to cut them off. (1.) The Kohathites must not see the holy things till the priests had covered them, ver. 20. Even they that bore the vessels of the Lord, saw not what they bore; so much were even they in the dark concerning the gospel, whose office it was to expound the law. And (2.) when they were covered they might not touch them, at least not the ark, called here the holy thing, upon pain of death, ver. 15. Uzza was struck dead for the breach of this law. Thus were the Lord's ministers themselves then kept in fear, and that was a dispensation of terror, as well as darkness; but now through Christ the case is altered, we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled the word of life, 1 John i. 1. and we are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace.

21. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 22. Take also the sum of the sons of Gershon throughout the houses of their fathers, by their families; 23. From thirty years old and upward, until fifty years old shalt thou number them: all that enter in to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation. 24. This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, to serve, and for burdens. 25. And they shall bear the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tabernacle of the congregation, his covering, and the covering of the badgers' skin that is above upon it, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 26. And the hangings of the court, and the hanging for the door of the gate of the court which is by the tabernacle, and by the altar round about, and their cords, and all the instruments of their service, and

all that is made for them: so shall they serve. 27. At the appointment of Aaron and his sons, shall be all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, in all their burdens, and in all their service; and ye shall appoint unto them in charge all their burdens. 28. This is the service of the families of the sons of Gershon, in the tabernacle of the congregation: and their charge shall be under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. 29. ¶ As for the sons of Merari, thou shalt number them after their families, by the house of their fathers; 30. From thirty years old and upward, even unto fifty years shalt thou number them, every one that entereth in to the service, to do the work of the tabernacle of the congregation. 31. And this is the charge of their burden, according to all their service in the tabernacle of the congregation; the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and sockets thereof, 32. And the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords, with all their instruments, and with all their service: and by name ye shall reckon the instruments of the charge of their burden. 33. This is the service of the families of the sons of Merari, according to all their service in the tabernacle of the congregation, under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

We have here the charge of the other two families of the Levites, which though not so honourable as the first, yet was necessary, and was to be done regularly. 1. The Gershonites were charged with all the drapery of the tabernacle; the curtains and hangings, and the coverings of badgers' skins, ver. 22—26. Those they were to take down, when the cloud removed and the ark and the rest of the holy things were carried away, to pack up and bring with them, and then to set up again, where the cloud rested. Aaron and his sons allotted to them their respective charge, you shall take care of such a curtain, and you of such a hanging, that every one might know his work, and there might be no confusion, ver. 27. Ithamar particularly was to take the oversight of them, ver. 27, 28. The Merarites were charged with a heavy carriage, the boards and bars, pillars and sockets, the pins and cords, and those were delivered them by name, ver. 31, 32. An inventory was given them of every particular, that it might be forth-coming, and nothing to seek when the tabernacle was to be set up again. Though these seemed of less importance, than the other things pertaining to the sanctuary, yet there was this care taken of them, to teach us with the greatest exactness to preserve pure and entire all divine institutions and to take care that nothing be lost. It also intimates the care God has of his church, and every member of it; the good shepherd calls his own sheep by name, Joh. x. 3.

Here were thousands of men employed about these services, though a much less number would serve, for the bearing of those burdens; but it was requisite that the tabernacle should be taken down, and set up with great expedition, and many hands would make quick work, especially when every one knew his work. They had tents of their own to take care of, and to take along with them, but the young men under thirty, and the old men above fifty might serve for them; nor is there any mention of them, for God's house must always be preferred before our own. Their care was preposterous who built and ceiled their own houses, while God's house lay waste, Hag. i. 4—9.

The death of the infants is represented as the taking down of the tabernacle, 2 Cor. v. 1. and the putting of it off, 2 Pet. i. 14. The immortal soul, like the most holy things, is first covered and taken away, carried by angels unseen under the inspection of the Lord Jesus, our Eleazar; and care is taken also of the body, the skin, and flesh, which are as the curtains, the bones and sinews, which are as the bars and pillars; none of these shall be lost; commandment is given concerning the bones, a covenant made with the dust; these are in safe custody, and shall all be produced in the great body, when this tabernacle shall be set up again, and these vile bodies made like the glorious body of Jesus Christ.

34. ¶ And Moses and Aaron, and the chief of the congregation numbered the sons of the Kohathites, after their families, and after the house of their fathers: 35. From thirty years old and upward, even unto fifty years old, every one that entereth into the service for the work in the tabernacle of the congregation, 36. And those that were numbered of them by their families, were two thousand seven hundred and fifty. 37. These were they that were numbered of the families of the Kohathites, all that might do service in the tabernacle of the congregation, which Moses and Aaron did number, according to the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses. 38. And those that were numbered of the sons of Gershon, throughout their families, and by the house of their fathers. 39. From thirty years old and upward, even unto fifty years old, every one that entereth in to the service for the work in the tabernacle of the congregation: 40. Even those that were numbered of them, throughout their families by the house of their fathers, were two thousand and six hundred and thirty. 41. These are they which were numbered of the families of the sons of Gershon, of all that might do service in the tabernacle of the congregation, whom Moses and Aaron did number, according to the commandment of the LORD. 42. ¶ And those that were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, throughout their families, by the house of their fathers; 43. From

43. From thirty years old and upward, even unto fifty years old, every one that entereth into the service for the work in the tabernacle of the congregation: 44. Even those that were numbered of them after their families, were three thousand and two hundred. 45. These be those that were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron numbered, according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses. 46. All those that were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron and the chief of Israel numbered, after their families, and after the house of their fathers: 47. From thirty years old and upward, even unto fifty years old, every one that came to do the service of the ministry, and the service of the burden in the tabernacle of the congregation; 48. Even those that were numbered of them were eight thousand and five hundred and fourscore. 49. According to the commandment of the LORD, they were numbered by the hand of Moses, every one according to his service, and according to his burden: thus were they numbered of him, as the LORD commanded Moses.

We have here a particular account of the numbers of the three families of the Levites respectively, that is of the effective men, between thirty years old and fifty.

Observe, 1. That the Kohathites were in all, eight thousand and six hundred, from a month old and upward; but of those there were but two thousand seven hundred and fifty serviceable men, not a third part: The Gershonites in all, seven thousand and five hundred, and of them but two thousand six hundred and thirty serviceable men, little more than a third part. Note, Of the many that add to the numbers of the Church, there are comparatively but few that contribute to the service of it. So it has been, and so it is; many have a place in the tabernacle, that do but little of the work of the tabernacle, *Phil. ii. 20, 21.* 2. That the Merarites were but six thousand and two hundred in all, and yet of these there were three thousand and two hundred serviceable men, which were a good deal above half. The greatest burden lay upon that family, the boards, and pillars, and sockets: and God so ordered it that though they were the fewest in number, yet they should have the most able men among them, for whatever service God calls men to, he will furnish them for it, and give strength in proportion to the work, grace sufficient. 3. The whole number of the able men of the tribe of Levi, which entered into God's host to war his warfare, was but eight thousand five hundred and eighty, whereas the able men of the other tribes that entered into the host of Israel to war their warfare were many more. The least of the tribes had almost four times as many able men as the Levites, and some of them more than eight times as many: for those that are engaged in the service of this world, and war after the flesh, are many more than those that are devoted to the service of God, and fight the good fight of faith.

C H A P. V.

In this chapter we have, 1. An order passed pursuant to the law already made, for the removing the unclean out of the camp, *ver. 1—4.* 2. A repetition of the laws concerning restitution, in case of wrong done to a neighbour, *ver. 5—8.* And concerning the appropriating of the hallowed things to the priests, *ver. 9, 10.* 3. A new law made concerning the trial of a wife suspected of adultery, by the waters of jealousy, *ver. 11—31.*

1. **A**ND the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead. 3. Both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps in the midst whereof I dwell. 4. And the children of Israel did so, and put them out without the camp: as the LORD spake unto Moses, so did the children of Israel. 5. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 6. Speak unto the children of Israel, When a man or a woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the LORD, and that person be guilty; 7. Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed. 8. But if the man hath no kinsman to recompense the trespass unto, let the trespass be recompensed unto the LORD, even to the priest: beside the ram of the atonement, whereby an atonement shall be made for him. 9. And every offering of all the holy things of the children of Israel, which they bring unto the priest, shall be his. 10. And every man's hallowed things shall be his: whatsoever any man giveth the priest, it shall be his.

Here is, 1. A command for the purifying of the camp, by turning out from within its lines all those that were ceremonially unclean, by issues, leprosy, or the touch of dead bodies, until they were cleansed according to law, *ver. 2, 3.* And the executing of these orders immediately, *ver. 4.* (1.) The camp was now newly modelled and put in order, and therefore to complete the reformation of it, it is next to be cleansed. Note, The purity of the church must be as carefully consulted and preserved, as the peace and order of it. It is requisite not only that every Israelite be confined to his own standard, but that every polluted Israelite be separated from it. The wisdom from above is first pure then peaceable. (2.) God's tabernacle

was now fixed in the midst of their camp, and therefore they must be careful to keep it clean. Note, The greater profession of religion any house or family makes, the more they are obliged to put away iniquity far from the tabernacle, *Job xxii. 23.* The person, the place in the midst of which God dwells, must not be defiled, for if it be, he is affronted, offended, and provoked to withdraw, *1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.*

This expulsion of the unclean out of the camp; was to signify, (1.) What the governors of the Church ought to do; they must separate between the precious and the vile, and purge out scandalous persons, as old leaven, *1 Cor. v. 13.* lest others be infected and defiled, *Heb. xii. 15.* It is for the glory of Christ and the edification of his Church, that those who are openly and incorrigibly profane and vicious, should be put out and kept from Christian communion till they repent. (2.) What God himself will do in the great day; he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather out of his kingdom all things that offend. As here the unclean were shut out of the camp, so into the new Jerusalem no unclean thing shall enter, *Rev. xxi. 27.* 2. A law concerning restitution; in case of wrong done to a neighbour. It is called a sin that men commit, *ver. 6.* because it is common among men; a sin of man, i. e. a sin against man, so it is thought it should be translated and understood. If a man over-reach or defraud his brother in any matter it is to be looked upon as a trespass against the Lord, who is the protector of right, the punisher of wrong, and who doth strictly charge and command us to do justly. Now what is to be done when a man's awakened conscience charges him with guilt of this kind, and brings it to his remembrance though done long ago? 1. He must confess his sin, confess it to God, confess it to his neighbour, and so take shame to himself. If he have denied it before, though it go against the grain to own himself in a lie, yet he must do it; because his heart was hardened he denied it, therefore he has no other way of making it appear that his heart is now softened, but by confessing it. 2. He must bring a sacrifice, a ram of atonement, *ver. 8.* Satisfaction must be made for the offence done to God, whose law is broken, as well as for the loss sustained by our neighbour; restitution in that case is not sufficient without faith and repentance. 3. Yet the sacrifices would not be accepted, till full amends was made to the party wronged, not only the principal, but a fifth part added to it, *ver. 7.* It is certain, while that which is got by injustice is knowingly retained in the hands, the guilt of the injustice remains upon the conscience, and is not purged by sacrifice or offering, prayers or tears, for it is one, and the same continued act of sin persisted in. This law we had before, *Lev. vi. 4.* and it is here added, that if the party wronged were dead, and he had no near kinsman who was intitled to the debt, or it were any way uncertain to whom the restitution should be made, that should not serve for an excuse to detain what was unjustly gotten; to whomsoever it pertained, it was certainly none of his that got it by sin, and therefore it must be given to the priest, *ver. 8.* If there were any that could make out a title to it, it must not be given to the priest. God hates robbery for burnt-offerings; but if there were not, then it lapsed to the great Lord, (*ob dejectionem sanguinis*) and the priests were his receivers. Note, Some work of piety or charity is a piece of necessary justice to be done by those who are conscious to themselves that they have done wrong, but know not how otherwise to make restitution; what is not our property, will never be our profit. 3. A general rule concerning hallowed things given upon this occasion, that whatever was given to the priest, *his it shall be*, *ver. 9, 10.* 1. He that gave it shall not receive his gift again, upon any pretence whatsoever. This law ratifies and confirms all grants for pious uses, that people might not give things to the priests in a pang, and then recal them in a fret. 2. The other priests shall not come in sharers with that priest who then officiated, and to whom the hallowed thing, whatever it was, was given. Let him that was most ready and diligent in attending fare the better for it; if he do the work, let him have the pay, and much good may it do him.

11. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 12. Speak unto the children of Israel and say unto them, If any man's wife go aside, and commit a trespass against him, 13. And a man lie with her carnally, and it be hid from the eyes of her husband, and be kept close, and she be defiled, and there be no witness against her, neither she be taken with the manner; 14. And the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled; or if the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled: 15. Then shall the man bring his wife unto the priest, and he shall bring her offering for her, the tenth part of an ephah of barley-meal; he shall pour no oil upon it, nor put frankincense thereon, for it is an offering of jealousy, an offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance. 16. And the priest shall bring her near and set her before the LORD. 17. And the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel, and of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water. 18. And the priest shall set the woman before the LORD, and uncover the woman's head, and put the offering of memorial in her hands, which is the jealousy-offering: and the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that causeth the curse. 19. And the priest shall charge her by an oath, and say unto the woman, If no man have lien with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness with another instead of thy husband, be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse: 20. But if thou hast gone aside to another instead of thy husband, and if thou be defiled, and some man hath lien with thee beside thine husband, 21. Then the priest shall charge the woman with an oath of cursing, and the priest shall say unto the woman, The LORD make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when the LORD doth make thy thigh to rot, and thy belly to swell; 22. And this water that causeth the curse, shall go into thy bowels to make thy belly to swell, and thy thigh to rot: And the woman shall say, Amen, Amen. 23. And the priest shall write these curses in a

book, and he shall blot *them* out with the bitter water: 24. And he shall cause the woman to drink the bitter water that causeth the curse: and the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter. 25. Then the priest shall take the jealousy-offering out of the woman's hand, and shall wave the offering before the LORD, and offer it upon the altar. 26. And the priest shall take an handful of the offering, even the memorial thereof, and burn it upon the altar, and afterward shall cause the woman to drink the water. 27. And when he hath made her to drink the water, then it shall come to pass, *that* if she be defiled, and have done trespasses against her husband; that the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter, and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot: and the woman shall be a curse among her people. 28. And if the woman be not defiled, but be clean: then she shall be free, and shall conceive seed. 29. This is the law of jealousies, when a wife goeth aside to another instead of her husband, and is defiled: 30. Or when the spirit of jealousy cometh upon him, and he be jealous over his wife, and shall set the woman before the LORD, and the priest shall execute upon her all this law, 31. Then shall the man be guiltless from iniquity, and this woman shall bear her iniquity.

We have here the law concerning the solemn trial of a wife, whose husband was jealous of her. Observe, 1. What was the case supposed, That a man had some reason to suspect his wife to have committed adultery, *ver.* 12, 13, 14. Here, 1. The sin of adultery is justly represented as an exceeding sinful sin; it is going aside from God and virtue, and the good way, *Prov.* ii. 17. It is committing a trespass against the husband, robbing him of his honour, alienating his right, introducing a spurious brood into his family to share with his children in his estate, and violating her covenant with him: it is being defiled, for nothing pollutes the mind and conscience more than this sin doth. 2. It is supposed to be a sin that great care is taken by the sinners to conceal; which there is no witness of; *the eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight*, *Job.* xxiv. 15. And the adulterer takes her opportunity when the good man is not at home, *Prov.* vii. 19. It would not covet to be secret if it were not shameful; and the devil that draws sinners to this sin teaches them how to cover it. 3. The spirit of jealousy is supposed to come upon the husband, of which Solomon saith it is the rage of a man, *Prov.* vi. 34. and that it is cruel as the grave, *Cant.* viii. 6. 4. Yet (say the Jewish writers) he must make it to appear that he has some just cause for the suspicion. The rule they give is, If the husband have said unto his wife before witnesses, "Be not thou in secret with such a man," and notwithstanding that admonition, it is afterwards proved that she was in secret with that man, though her father, or brother, then he may compel her to drink the bitter water. But the law here doth not tie him to that particular method of proving the just cause of his suspicion; it might be otherwise proved. In case it could be proved that she had committed adultery, she was to be put to death, *Lev.* xx. 10. but if it were uncertain, then this law took place. From hence, (1.) Let all wives be admonished not to give any the least occasion for the suspicion of their chastity; it is not enough that they abstain from the evil of uncleanness, but they must *abstain from all appearance* of it, from every thing that looks like it, or leads to it, or may give the least umbrage to jealousy, for *how great a matter may a little fire kindle?* (2.) Let all husbands be admonished not to entertain any causeless or unjust suspicions of their wives. If charity in general; much more conjugal affection teacheth to *think no evil*, *1 Cor.* xiii. 5. It is the happiness of the virtuous woman, that *the heart of her husband doth fully trust in her*, *Prov.* xxxi. 11. 2. What was the course prescribed in this case. (1.) That if the suspected wife were innocent, she might not continue under the reproach and uneasiness of her husband's jealousy. (2.) That if she were guilty, her sin might find her out, and others might hear and learn, and take warning. Now the process of the trial must be thus. 1. Her husband must bring her to the priest, with the witnesses that could prove the ground of his suspicion, and desire she might be put upon her trial. The Jews say, the priest must first endeavour to persuade her to confess the truth, saying to this purpose: "Dear daughter, Perhaps thou wast overtaken by drinking wine, or wast carried away by the heat of youth, or the examples of ill neighbours; come, confess the truth for the sake of his great name which is described in the most sacred ceremony, and do not let it be blotted out with the bitter water." If she confessed, saying, I am defiled, she was not put to death, but was divorced and lost her dowry; if she said, I am pure, then they proceeded. 2. He must bring a coarse offering of barley-meal, without oil or frankincense, agreeable to the present afflicted state of his family, for a great affliction it was, either to have cause to be jealous, or to be jealous without cause. It is an offering of memorial, to signify that what was to be done, was intended as a religious appeal to the omniscience and justice of God. 3. The priest was to prepare the water of jealousy; holy water out of the laver at which the priests were to wash when they ministered; this must be brought in an earthen vessel, containing (they say) about a pint; and it must be an earthen vessel, because the coarser and plainer every thing was, the more agreeable it was to the occasion. Dust must be put into the water, to signify the reproach she lay under, and the shame she ought to take to herself, putting her mouth in the dust, but dust from the door of the tabernacle, to put an honour upon every thing that pertaineth to the place God had chosen to put his name there, and to keep up in the people a reverence for it; see *John* viii. 6. 4. The woman was to be set before the Lord, at the east gate of the temple court, (say the Jews) and her head was to be uncovered, in token of her sorrowful condition, and there she stood for a spectacle to the world, that other women might learn not to do after her lewdness, *Ezek.* xxiii. 48. Only the Jews say, her own servants were not to be present, that she might not seem vile in their sight, who were to give honour to her; her husband also must be dismissed. 5. The priest was to adjure her to tell the truth, and to denounce the curse of God against her if she were guilty, and to declare what would be the effect of her drinking the water of jealousy, *ver.* 19, 20, 21, 22. He must assure her, that if she were innocent the water would do her no harm, *ver.* 19. None need fear the curse of the law, if they have not broken the commands of the law. But if she were guilty, this water would be poison to her, it would make her belly to swell, and her thigh to rot, and she should be a curse or abomination among her people, *ver.* 21, 22.

To this she must say Amen, as Israel must do to the curses pronounced on mount Ebal, *Deut.* xxvii. 17. Some think the Amen being doubled respects both parts of the adjuration, both that which freed her if innocent, and that which condemned her if guilty. No woman if she were guilty could say amen to this adjuration, and drink the water upon it, unless she disbelieved the truth of God, or defiled his justice, and was come to such a pitch of impudence and hard-heartedness in sin, as to challenge God Almighty to do his worst, and choose rather to venture upon his curse, than to give him glory by making confession; thus has whoredom taken away the heart. 6. The priest was to write this curse in a scrip or scroll of parchment, *verbatim*, as he had expressed it, and then to wipe or scrape out what he had written in the water, *ver.* 23. to signify that it was that curse which impregnated the water, and gave it its strength to effect what was intended. It signified that if she were innocent the curse should be blotted out and never appear against her, as it is written, *Isa.* xliii. 25. *I am he that blot out thy transgressions*; and *Psal.* li. 9. *Blot out mine iniquities*. But that if she were guilty, the curse, as it was written, being infused into the water it would enter into her bowels with the water, even like oil into her bones, *Psal.* cix. 18. as we read of a curse entering into a house, *Lech.* v. 4. 7. The woman must then drink the water, *ver.* 24. it is called the bitter water, some think, because they put wormwood in it to make it bitter, or rather because it caused the curse. Thus sin is called an evil thing, and a bitter, for the same reason, because it causeth the curse. *Jer.* ii. 19. If she had been guilty, (and otherwise it did not cause the curse,) she was made to know that though her stolen waters had been sweet, and her bread eaten in secret pleasant, yet the end was bitter as wormwood, *Prov.* ix. 17. and chap. v. 4. Let all that meddle with forbidden pleasures know that they will be bitterness in the latter end. The Jews say, that it upon denouncing the curses the woman was so terrified that she durst not drink the water, but confessed she was defiled, the priest flung down the water, and cast her offering among the ashes, and she was divorced without dowry: if she confessed not, and yet would not drink, they forced her to it; and if she were ready to throw it up again, they hastened her away, that she might not pollute the holy place. 8. Before she drank the water, the jealousy-offering was waved and offered upon the altar, *ver.* 25, 26. a handful of it was burnt for a memorial and the remainder of it eaten by the priests, unless the husband were a priest, and then it was scattered among the ashes. This offering in the midst of the transaction, signified that the whole was an appeal to God, as a God that knows all things, and from whom no secret is hid.

Lastly, All things being thus performed according to the law, they were to wait the issue. The water with a little dust put into it, and the scrapings of a written parchment, had no natural tendency at all to do either good or hurt; but if God was thus appealed to in the way of an instituted ordinance, though otherwise the innocent might have continued under suspicion, and the guilty undiscovered; yet God would for far own his own institution, as that in a little time, by the miraculous operation of providence, the innocence of the innocent should be cleared, and the sin of the guilty should find them out. 1. If the suspected woman were really guilty, the water she drank would be poison to her, *ver.* 27. her belly would swell and her thigh rot by a vile disease for vile deserts, and she would mourn at the last, when her flesh and her body are consumed, *Prov.* v. 19. Bishop Patrick saith, from some of the Jewish writers, that the effects of these waters appeared presently, she grew pale, and her eyes ready to start out of her head. Dr. Lightfoot saith, that sometimes it appeared not of two or three years, but she bare no children, was sickly, languished, and rotted at last; it is probable, some indications appeared presently. The Rabbins say, the adulterer also died the same day and hour that the adulteress did, and in the same manner too; that his belly swelled, and his secret parts rotted; a disease perhaps not much unlike that which in these latter ages the avenging hand of a righteous God has made the scourge of uncleanness, and with which whores and whoremongers infect and plague, and ruin one another, since they escape punishment from men. The Jewish doctors add, that the waters had this effect upon the adulteress only, in case the husband had never offended in the same kind; but if he had at any time defiled the marriage-bed, God did not thus right him against his injurious wife; and that therefore in the latter and degenerate ages of the Jewish Church, when uncleanness did abound, this way of trial was generally diffused and laid aside: men knowing their own crimes, were content not to know their wives crimes. And to this perhaps may refer that threatening, *Hos.* iv. 14. *I will not punish your spouses when they commit adultery, for yourselves are separated with whores*. 2. If she were innocent the water she drank would be physic to her, *ver.* 28. She shall be free and shall conceive seed. The Jewish writers magnify the good effects of this water to the innocent woman; that to recompence her for the wrong done to her by the suspicion, she would alter the drinking of these waters be stronger and look better than ever; if she were sickly she should become healthy, should bear a man child, and have easy labour.

From the whole we may learn, 1. That secret sins are known to God, and sometimes are strangely brought to light in this life; however, there is a day coming when God will by Jesus Christ, as here by the priest, judge the secrets of man according to the gospel, *Rom.* ii. 16. 2. That in particular Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. The violation of conjugal faith and chastity is highly provoking to the God of heaven, and sooner or later it will be reckoned for. Though we have not now the waters of jealousy to be a sensible terror to the unclean, yet we have a word from God which ought to be as great a terror, that if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, *1 Cor.* iii. 17. 3. That God will find out some way or other to clear the innocency of the innocent, and to bring forth their righteousness as the light. 4. That to the pure all things are pure, but to the defiled nothing is so, *Tit.* i. 15. The same word is to some a favour of life unto life, to others a favour of death unto death, like those waters of jealousy, according as they receive it; the same providence is for good to some, and for hurt to others, *Jer.* xxiv. 5—9. And whatsoever it is intended for, it shall not return void.

C H A P. VI.

In this chapter we have, 1. The law concerning Nazarites, (1.) what it was which the vow of a Nazarite obliged him to, *ver.* 1—8. (2.) A remedial law in case a Nazarite happened to be polluted by the touch of a dead body, *ver.* 9—12. (3.) The solemnity of his discharge when his time was up, *ver.* 13—21. 2. Instructions given to the priests how they should bless the people, *ver.* 22—27.

1. AND the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves

separates unto the LORD: 3. He shall separate *himself* from wine, and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. 4. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine-tree, from the kernels even to the husk. 5. All the days of the vows of his separation, there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled in the which he separateth *himself* unto the LORD, he shall be holy; and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. 6. All the days that he separateth *himself* unto the LORD, he shall come at no dead body. 7. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, or for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God is upon his head. 8. All the days of his separation he is holy unto the LORD. 9. And if any man die very suddenly by him, and he hath defiled the head of his consecration: then he shall shave his head in the day of his cleansing, on the seventh day shall he shave it. 10. And on the eighth day he shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 11. And the priest shall offer the one for a sin-offering, and the other for a burnt-offering, and make an atonement for him, for that he sinned by the dead, and shall hallow his head that same day. 12. And he shall consecrate unto the LORD, the days of his separation, and shall bring a lamb of the first year for a trespass-offering: but the days that were before shall be lost, because his separation was defiled. 13. ¶ And this is the law of the Nazarite: When the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall be brought unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 14. And he shall offer his offering unto the LORD, one-lamb of the first year without blemish, for a burnt-offering, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, for a sin-offering, and one ram without blemish, for peace-offerings. 15. And a basket of unleavened bread cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, and wafers of unleavened bread anointed with oil, and their meat-offering, and their drink-offerings. 16. And the priest shall bring *them* before the LORD, and shall offer his sin-offering, and his burnt-offering. 17. And he shall offer the ram, for a sacrifice of peace-offerings unto the LORD, with the basket of unleavened bread: the priest shall offer also his meat-offering, and his drink-offering. 18. And the Nazarite shall shave the head of his separation, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; and shall take the hair of the head of his separation, and put it in the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings. 19. And the priest shall take the sodden shoulder of the ram, and one unleavened cake out of the basket, and one unleavened wafer: and shall put *them* upon the hands of the Nazarite, after the hair of his separation is shaven. 20. And the priest shall wave *them* for a wave-offering before the LORD: this is holy for the priest, with the wave-breast, and heave shoulder: and after that the Nazarite may drink wine. 21. This is the law of the Nazarite who hath vowed, and of his offering unto the LORD for his separation, besides that that his hand shall get: according to the vow which he vowed, so he must do after the law of his separation.

After the law for the discovery and shame of those that by sin had made themselves vile, fitly follows this for the direction and encouragement of those, that by their eminent piety and devotion made themselves honourable, and distinguished themselves from their neighbours. It is very probable, there were those before the making of this law, that went under the character of Nazarites, and were celebrated by that title, as persons professing greater strictness and zeal in religion than other people; for the vow of a Nazarite is spoken of here as a thing already well known, but the obligation of it is reduced to a greater certainty than hitherto it had been. Joseph is called a Nazarite among his brethren, Gen. xlix. 26. Not only because separate from them, but because eminent among them.

Observe, 1. The general character of a Nazarite; it is a person separated unto the Lord, ver. 2. Some were Nazarites for life, either by divine designation, as Sampson, Judg. xiii. 5. And John Baptist, Luke i. 15. Or by their parents' vow concerning them, as Samuel, 1 Sam. i. 11. Of these this law speaks not: Others were so for a certain time, and by their own voluntary engagement, and concerning them rules are given by this law. A woman might bind herself with the vow of a Nazarite, under the limitations we find, Numb. xxx. 3. where the vow which the woman is supposed to vow unto the Lord, seems to be meant especially of this vow. The Nazarites were, (1.) Devoted to the Lord during the time of their Nazariteship, and, it is probable, spent much of their time in the study of the law, in acts of devotion, and instructing others. An air of piety was thereby put upon them, and upon their whole conversation. (2.) They were separated from common persons and common things. Those that are consecrated to God, must not be conformed to this world. They distinguished themselves not only from others, but from what they themselves were before and after. (3.) They separated themselves by vowing a vow; every Israelite was bound

by the divine law to love God with all his heart, but the Nazarites by their own act and deed bound themselves to some religious observances, as fruits and expressions of that love, which other Israelites were not bound to. Some such there were whose spirits God stirred up to be in their day the ornaments of the Church, the standard-bearers of religion, and patterns of piety. It is spoken of as a great favour to their nation, that God raised up of their young men for Nazarites, Amos ii. 11. The Nazarites were known in the streets, and respected as *purer than snow, whiter than milk*, Lam. iv. 7. Christ was called in reproach a Nazarene, so were his followers; but he was no Nazarite according to this law, he drank wine, and touched dead bodies, yet in him this type had its accomplishment, for in him all purity and perfection meet; and every true Christian is a spiritual Nazarite separated by vow unto the Lord. We find St. Paul, by the persuasion of his friends, in complaisance to the Jews, submitting to this law of the Nazarites; but at the same time it is declared, that the Gentiles should observe no such thing, Acts xxi. 14—25. It was looked upon as a great honour to a man to be a Nazarite, and therefore if a man speak of it as a punishment, as suppose he say, He will be a Nazarite rather than do so or so, he is (say the Jews) a wicked man; but he that vows to the Lord in way of holiness to be a Nazarite, lo, the crown of his God is upon his head. 2. The particular obligations that the Nazarites lay under; that the families of superstitious men might not multiply their restraints endlessly, God himself lays down the law for them, and gives them the rule of their profession. 1. They must have nothing to do with the fruit of the vine, ver. 3, 4. They must drink no wine nor strong drink, nor eat grapes, nor not the kernel or the husk, they might not so much as eat a raisin. The learned Dr. Lightfoot hath a conjecture (*Hor. Heb. in Luc. i. 15.*) that as the ceremonial pollutions, by leprosy and otherwise, represented the sinful state of a fallen man, so the institution of the order of Nazarites was designed to represent the pure and perfect state of man in innocency, and that the tree of knowledge forbidden to Adam, was the vine, and for that reason it was forbidden to the Nazarites, and all the produce of it. They did the tempter's work who gave the Nazarites wine to drink, Amos ii. 12. persuading them to that forbidden fruit. That it was reckoned a perfection and praise to drink wine, appears by the instance of the Rechabites, Jer. xxxv. 6. They were to drink no wine; 1. That they might be examples of temperance and mortification. Those that separate themselves to God and to his honour, must not gratify the desires of the body, but keep that under and bring it into subjection. Drinking a little wine for the stomach's sake is allowed, to help that, 1 Tim. v. 23. But drinking much wine for the palate's sake, to please that, doth by no means become those who profess to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2. That they might be qualified to employ themselves in the service of God. They must not drink lest they forget the law, Prov. xxxi. 5. lest they should err through wine, Isa. xxviii. 7. Let all Christians oblige themselves to be very moderate in the use of wine and strong drink, for if the love of these once get the mastery of a man, he becomes a very easy prey to Satan. It is observable, that because they were to drink no wine, (which was the thing mainly intended) they were to eat nothing that came of the vine, to teach us, with the utmost care and caution to avoid sin, and every thing that borders upon it and leads to it, or may be a temptation to us. Abstain from all appearance of evil, 1 Thess. v. 22. 2. They must not cut their hair, ver. 5. They must neither poll their heads, nor shave their beard; this was the mark of Samson's Nazariteship which we often read of in his story. Now, (1.) This signified a noble neglect of the body, and the ease and ornament of it, which became those who being separated to God ought to be wholly taken up with their souls, to secure their peace and beauty. It signified, that they had for the present renounced all sorts of sensual pleasures and delights, and resolved to live a life of self-denial and mortification. Mephibosheth in sorrow trimmed not his beard, 2 Sam. xix. 24. (2.) Some observe that long hair is spoken of as a badge of subjection, 1 Cor. xi. 5, &c. So that the long hair of the Nazarites noted their subjection to God, and their putting themselves under his dominion. (3.) By this they were known to all that met them to be Nazarites and so it commanded respect. It made them look great without art; it was nature's crown to the head, and a testimony for them, that they had preserved their purity. For if they had been defiled their hair must have been cut, ver. 9. See Jer. vii. 29. 3. They must not come near any dead body, ver. 6, 7. Others might touch dead bodies and contracted only a ceremonial pollution by it for some time, some must do it else the dead must be unburied, but the Nazarites must not do it, upon pain of forfeiting all the honour of their Nazariteship. They must not attend the funeral of any relation, no not father or mother, no more than the high-priest himself, because the consecration of his God is upon his head. Those that separate themselves to God must learn, 1. To distinguish themselves, and do more than others. 2. To keep their consciences pure from dead works, and not to touch the unclean thing. The greater profession of religion we make, and the more eminent we appear, the greater care we must take to avoid all sin, for we have so much the more honour to lose by it. 3. To moderate their affections even to their near relations, so as not to let their sorrow for the loss of them break in upon their joy in God, and submission to his will. See Math. viii. 21, 22. 4. All the days of their separation they must be holy to the Lord, ver. 8. This was the meaning of those external observances, and without this they were of no account. The Nazarites must be devoted to God, employed for him, and their minds intent upon him; they must keep themselves pure in heart and life, and be in every thing conformable to the divine image and will; this is to be holy, this is to be a Nazarite indeed. 3. The provision that was made for the cleansing of a Nazarite, if he happened unavoidably to contract a ceremonial pollution by the touch of a dead body. No penalty is ordered by this law for the wilful breach of the foregoing laws, for it was not supposed that a man who had so much religion as to make that vow, could have so little as to break it presumptuously; nor could it be supposed that he should drink wine, or have his hair cut, but by his own fault; but purely by the providence of God, without any fault of his own, he might be near a dead body and that is the case put, ver. 9. If a man die very suddenly by him he has defiled the head of his consecration. Note, Death sometimes takes men away very suddenly, and without any previous warning. A man might be well and dead in so little a time, as that the most careful Nazarite could not avoid being polluted by the dead body; so short a step is it sometimes, and so soon taken, from time to eternity. God prepare us for sudden death!

In this case, 1. He must be purified from the ceremonial pollution he had contracted, as others must upon the seventh day, ver. 9. Nay, more was required for the purifying of a Nazarite than of another person that had touched a dead body; he must bring a sin-offering and a burnt-offering, and an atonement must be made for him, ver. 10, 11. This teaches us, that sins of infirmity, and the faults we are overtaken in by surprise, must be seriously repented of, and an application made of the virtue of Christ's sacrifice to our souls, for the forgiveness of them every day, 1 John ii. 1, 2. And if that those who make an eminent profession of religion do any thing to sully the reputation of their profession, more is expected from them than others, for the retrieving both of their peace, and of their credit. 2. He must

must begin the days of his separation again, for all that were past before his pollution, though coming even so near the period of time set, were lost and not reckoned to him, *ver.* 12. This obliged them to be very careful not to defile themselves by the dead, for that was the only thing that lost their time; and it teaches us, That if a righteous man turn away from his righteousness, and defile himself with dead works, all his righteousness that he has done shall be *lost to him*, Ezek. xxxiii. 13. It is all lost, all in vain if he doth not persevere, Gal. iii. 4. He must begin again, and do his first works. 4. The law for the solemn discharge of a Nazarite from his vow, when he had completed the time he fixed to himself; before the expiration of that term he could not be discharged; before he vowed it was in his own power, but it was too late after the vow to make enquiry; the Jews say, that the time of a Nazarite's vow could not be less than thirty days; and if a man said, I will be a Nazarite but for two days, yet he was bound for thirty; but it should seem Paul's vow was but seven days, Acts xxi. 27. Or rather, then he observed the ceremony of finishing that vow of Nazaritehip, from which being at a distance from the temple, he had discharged himself some years before at Cenchrea, only by the ceremony of cutting his hair, Acts xviii. 18.

When the time of the vowed separation was out, he was to be made free, (1.) Publicly, at the door of the tabernacle, *ver.* 13. That all might take notice of the finishing of his vow, and none might be offended, if they saw him now drink wine who had so lately refused. (2.) It was to be done with sacrifices, *ver.* 14. Left he should think that by his eminent piece of devotion he had made God a debtor to him, he is appointed even when he had finished his vow to bring an offering to God, for when we have done our utmost in duty to God, still we must own ourselves behind hand with him. He must bring one of each sort of the instituted offerings. (1.) A burnt-offering, as an acknowledgment of God's sovereign dominion over him, and all he had still, notwithstanding his discharge from this particular vow.

(2.) A sin-offering. This though mentioned second, *ver.* 14. yet seems to have been offered first, *ver.* 16. for atonement must be made for our sins, before any of our sacrifices can be accepted. And it is very observable, that even the Nazarite, that in the eye of men was purer than snow, and whiter than milk, yet durst not appear before the holy God without a sin-offering. Though he had fulfilled the vow of his separation without any pollution, yet he must bring a sacrifice for sin, for there is guilt insensibly contracted by the best of men, even in their best works: some good omitted, some ill admitted, which if we were dealt with in strict justice, would be our ruin; and which makes it necessary for us to receive the atonement, and plead it as our righteousness before God. (3.) A peace-offering, in thankfulness to God who had enabled him to fulfill his vow, and in supplication to God for grace, to preserve him from ever doing any thing unbecoming one that had been once a Nazarite; remembering that though he was now freed from the bonds of his own vow, he still remained under the bonds of the divine law. (4.) To those were added the meat-offerings and drink-offerings, according to the manner, *ver.* 15—17. for these always accompanied the burnt-offerings and meat-offerings: and besides those, a basket of unleavened cakes, and wafers. (5.) Part of the peace-offering, with a cake and wafer, was to be waved for a wave-offering, *ver.* 19, 20. and this was a gratuity to the priest, who had it for his pains, after it had been first presented to God. (6.) Besides all this, he might bring his free-will offerings, such as his hand shall get, *ver.* 21. More than this he might bring, but not less. And to grace the solemnity, it was common upon this occasion to have their friends to be at charges with them, Acts xxi. 24. Lastly, One ceremony more was appointed, which was like the cancelling of a bond when the condition is performed, and that was the cutting off his hair, which had been suffered to grow all the time of his being a Nazarite, and burning it in the fire over which the peace-offerings were boiling, *ver.* 18. This intimated, that his full performance of his vow was acceptable to God in Christ the great sacrifice, and not otherwise. Learn hence, to *sew and pay to the Lord our God, for he has no pleasure in fools.*

22. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 23. Speak unto Aaron, and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, 24. The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: 25. The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: 26. The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. 27. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.

Here, 1. The priests, among other good offices they were to do, are appointed solemnly to bless the people in the name of the Lord, *ver.* 23. It was part of their work, Deut. xxi. 5. Hereby God put an honour upon the priests; for the less is blessed of the better; and hereby he gave great comfort and satisfaction to the people, who looked upon the priest as God's mouth to them. Though the priest of himself could do no more but beg a blessing, yet being an intercessor by office, and doing that in his name, who commands the blessing, the prayer carried with it a promise, and he pronounced it as one having authority, with his hands lifted up, and his face towards the people. Now, 1. This was a type of Christ's errand into the world, which was to *bless us*, Acts iii. 26. as the high-priest of our profession. The last thing he did on earth was with unlifted hands to bless his disciples, Luke xxiv. 50, 51. The learned Bishop Pierſon observes it as a tradition of the Jews, that the priests blessed the people only at the close of the morning sacrifice, not of the evening sacrifice, to shew (saith he) that in the last days, the days of the Messiah, which are (as it were) the evening of the world, the benediction of the law should cease, and the blessings of Christ take place. 2. It was a pattern to gospel ministers, the masters of assemblies, who are in like manner to dismiss their solemn assemblies with a blessing. The same that are God's mouth to his people, to teach and command them, are his mouth likewise to bless them; and they that receive the law, shall receive the blessing. The Hebrew doctors warn the people that they say not, "What availeth the blessing of this poor simple priest? For (say they) the receiving of the blessing dependeth not on the priest, but on the holy blessed God." 2. A form of blessing is here prescribed them in other of their devotions, but this being God's command of the blessing, that it might not look like any thing of their own, he puts the very words into their mouths, *ver.* 24, 25, 26. Where observe, (1.) That the blessing is commanded upon each particular person, *the Lord bless thee*. They must each of them prepare themselves to receive the blessing, and then they should find enough in it to make them every man happy; *blessed shalt thou be*, Deut. xxviii. 3. If we take the law to ourselves, we may take the blessing to ourselves, as if our names were inserted. (1.) That the name Jehovah is three times reported in it, and (as the critics observe) each with a different accent, in the original; the Jews themselves think there is some mystery, and we know what it is, the New Testament having

explained it, which directs us to expect the blessing from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, each of which persons is Jehovah, and yet they are not three Lords, but one Lord, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. (3.) That the favour of God is all in all in this blessing, for that is the fountain of all good. (1.) *The Lord bless thee!* Our blessing God is only our speaking well of him, his blessing us is doing well for us; those whom he blesteth they are blessed indeed. (2.) *The Lord make his face shine upon thee!* Alluding to the shining of the sun upon the earth, to enlighten and comfort it, and to renew the face of it. The Lord love thee, and make thee to know that he loves thee: we cannot but be happy if we have God's love, and we cannot but be easy if we know that we have it. (3.) *The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee!* This is to the same purpose with the former, and it seems to allude to the smiles of a father upon his child, or of a man upon a friend whom he takes pleasure in. If God gives us the assurances of his special favour, and his acceptance of us, that will put gladness into the heart. Psalm iv. 7, 8. (4.) That the fruits of this favour conveyed by this blessing, are protection, pardon, and peace. 1. Protection from evil, *ver.* 24. The Lord keep thee, for it is he that keepeth Israel, and neither slumbers nor sleeps, Psalm cxxi. 4. And all believers are kept by the power of God. 2. Pardon of sin, *ver.* 25. The Lord be gracious, or merciful, unto thee. 3. Peace, *ver.* 26. including all that good, which goes to make up a complete happiness. 3. God here promiseth to ratify and confirm the blessing, *ver.* 27. *They shall put my name upon the children of Israel.* God gives them leave to make use of his name in blessing the people, and to bless them as his people, called by his name. This included all the blessings they could pronounce upon them, to mark them for God's peculiar, the people of his choice and love. God's name upon them was their honour, their comfort, their safety, their plea, *we are called by thy name, leave us not*. It is added, *I will bless them*. Note, A divine blessing goes along with divine institution, and puts virtue and efficacy into them. What Christ saith of the peace is true of the blessing, when God's ministers pronounce the blessing, Peace be to this congregation, if the sons of peace, and heirs of blessing be there, the peace, the blessing shall rest upon them, Luke x. 5, 6. For in every place where God doth record his name, he will meet his people and bless them.

C H A P. VII.

God having set up his house (as it were) in the midst of the camp of Israel, the princes of Israel here come a visiting with their presents astenants to their landlord, in the name of their respective tribes. They brought presents, 1. Upon the dedication of the tabernacle, for the service of that, *ver.* 1—9. 2. Upon the dedication of the altar, for the use of that, *ver.* 10—38. And 3. God graciously signified his acceptance of what was done, *ver.* 39. The two foregoing chapters were the records of additional laws God gave to Israel, this is the history of the additional services which Israel performed to God.

1. AND it came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and sanctified it, and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them, and sanctified them: 2. That the princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers (who were the princes of the tribes, and were over them that were numbered) offered: 3. And they brought their offering before the LORD, six covered waggons, and twelve oxen; a waggon for two of the princes, and for each one an ox: and they brought them before the tabernacle. 4. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 5. Take it of them, that they may be to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; and thou shalt give them unto the Levites, to every man according to his service. 6. And Moses took the waggons and oxen, and gave them unto the Levites. 7. Two waggons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershon, according to their service. 8. And four waggons and eight oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari, according unto their service, under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. 9. But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none: because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them, was that they should bear upon their shoulders.

Here is the offering of the princes to the service of the tabernacle. Observe, 1. When it was, not till it was fully set up, *ver.* 1. When all things were done both about the tabernacle itself, and the camp of Israel which surrounded it, according to the directions given, then they began their presents; probably about the eighth day of the second month. Note, Necessary observances must always take place of free-will-offerings: first those, and then these. 2. Who they were that offered, *The princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers*, *ver.* 2. Note, Those that are above others in power and dignity, ought to go before others, and endeavour to go beyond them in every thing that is good. The more any are advanced, the more is expected from them, for the greater opportunity they have of serving God and their generation. What is wealth and authority good for, but as they enable a man to do so much the more good in the world? 3. What they offered; six waggons with each of them a yoke of oxen to draw them, *ver.* 3. Doubtless these waggons were agreeable to the rest of the furniture of the tabernacle, and its appurtenances, the best of the kind, like the carriages which great princes use. When they go in progress. Some think, God by Moses intimated to them what they should bring; or their own consideration perhaps suggested to them to make this present. Though God's wisdom has ordered all the essentials of the tabernacle, yet it seems these accidental conveniences were left to be provided by their own discretion, which was to set in order that which was wanting, (Tit. i. 5.) and these waggons, were not refused, though no pattern of them was shewn to Moses in the mount. Note, It must not be expected that the divine institution of ordinances should descend to all those circumstances which are determinable, and are fit to be left alterable by human prudence, that wisdom which is profitable to direct. Observe, No sooner is the tabernacle fully set up, but this provision is made for the removal of it. Note, Even when we are but just settled in the world, and think we are beginning to take root, we must be preparing for changes and removes, especially for the great change. When we are here in this world, every thing must be accommodated

accommodated to a militant and movable state. When the tabernacle was in the framing, the princes were very generous in their offerings, for then they brought *precious stones, and stones to be set*, Exod xxxv. 27. yet now they bring more presents. Note, Those that have done good, should study to abound therein yet more and more, and not be weary of well-doing. 4. How their offering was disposed of, and what use was made of it. The waggon and oxen were given to the Levites, to be used in carrying the tabernacle; both for their ease, for God would not have any of his servants over-burdened with work; and for the more safe and right conveyance of the several parts of the tabernacle, which would be best kept together, and sheltered from the weather in waggons. 1. The Gershonites that had the light carriage, the curtains and the hangings, had but two waggons, and two yoke of oxen, ver. 7. when they had loaded those they must carry the rest, if any remained, upon their shoulders. 2. The Merarites that had the heavy carriage, and that which was most unwieldy, the boards, pillars, sockets, &c. had four waggons, and four yoke of oxen allotted them, ver. 8. and yet if they had not more waggons of their own they would be obliged to carry a great deal upon their backs too, for the very silver sockets weighed a hundred talents, which was above four ton, and that was enough to load four waggons that were drawn but by one yoke of oxen apiece. But each socket being a talent weight, which is about a man's burden (as appears, 2 Kings v. 23.) probably they carried those on their backs, and put the boards and pillars into the waggons. Observe here, How God wisely and graciously ordered the most strength to those that had the most work. Each had waggons according to their service. Whatever burden God in his providence lays upon us, he will by his sufficient grace proportion the strength to it, 1 Cor. x. 13. 3. The Kohathites that had the most sacred carriage, had no waggons at all, because that which was their charge they were to carry upon their shoulders, ver. 9. with a particular care and veneration. When in David's time they carried the ark in a cart, God made them to know to their terror, by the death of Uzza, that they did not *seek him in due order*. See 1 Chron. xv. 13.

10. ¶ And the princes offered for dedicating of the altar, in the day that it was anointed, even the princes offered their offering before the altar. 11. And the LORD said unto Moses, They shall offer their offering each prince on his day, for the dedicating of the altar. 12. ¶ And he that offered his offering the first day, was Nahshon, the son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah. 13. And his offering was one silver charger, the weight thereof was an hundred and thirty *shekels*, one silver bowl of seventy shekels after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them were full of fine flour mingled with oil, for a meat-offering: 14. One spoon of ten *shekels* of gold, full of incense: 15. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt-offering: 16. One kid of the goats for a sin-offering: 17. And for a sacrifice of peace-offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, five lambs of the first year. This was the offering of Nahshon the son of Amminadab. 18. On the second day Nethaneel, the son of Zuar, prince of Issachar, did offer. 19. He offered for his offering one silver charger, the weight whereof was an hundred and thirty *shekels*, one silver bowl of seventy shekels after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil, for a meat-offering: 20. One spoon of gold of ten *shekels*, full of incense: 21. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt-offering: 22. One kid of the goats for a sin-offering: 23. And for a sacrifice of peace-offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, five lambs of the first year. This was the offering of Nethaneel the son of Zuar. 24. ¶ On the third day Eliab, the son of Helon, prince of the children of Zebulun did offer. 25. His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was an hundred and thirty *shekels*, one silver bowl of seventy shekels after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil, for a meat-offering: 26. One golden spoon of ten *shekels*, full of incense. 27. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt-offering: 28. One kid of the goats for a sin-offering: 29. And for a sacrifice of peace-offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, five lambs of the first year. This was the offering of Eliab, the son of Helon. 30. ¶ On the fourth day Elizur, the son of Shedeur, prince of the children of Reuben, did offer. 31. His offering was one silver charger, of an hundred and thirty *shekels*, one silver bowl of seventy shekels after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil, for a meat-offering: 32. One golden spoon of ten *shekels*, full of incense: 33. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt-offering. 34. One kid of the goats for a sin-offering. 35. And for a sacrifice of peace-offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, five lambs of the first year. This was the offering of Elizur, the son of Shedeur. 36. ¶ On the fifth day Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai, prince of the children of Simeon, did offer. 37. His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was an hundred and thirty *shekels*, one silver bowl of seventy shekels after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil, for a meat-offering;

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38. One golden spoon of ten *shekels*, full of incense. 39. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt-offering: 40. One kid of the goats for a sin-offering: 41. And for a sacrifice of peace-offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, five lambs of the first year. This was the offering of Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai. 42. ¶ On the sixth day Eliasaph, the son of Deuel, prince of the children of Gad, offered. 43. His offering was one silver charger, of the weight of an hundred and thirty *shekels*, a silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil, for a meat-offering: 44. One golden spoon of ten *shekels*, full of incense: 45. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year for a burnt-offering: 46. One kid of the goats for a sin-offering: 47. And for a sacrifice of peace-offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, five lambs of the first year. This was the offering of Eliasaph the son of Deuel. 48. ¶ On the seventh day Elishama, the son of Ammihud, prince of the children of Ephraim, offered. 49. His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was an hundred and thirty *shekels*, one silver bowl of seventy shekels after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil, for a meat-offering: 50. One golden spoon of ten *shekels*, full of incense: 51. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt-offering: 52. One kid of the goats for a sin-offering: 53. And for a sacrifice of peace-offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, five lambs of the first year. This was the offering of Elishama, the son of Ammihud. 54. ¶ On the eighth day offered Gamaliel, the son of Pedahzur, prince of the children of Manasseh. 55. His offering was one silver charger, of an hundred and thirty *shekels*, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil, for a meat-offering: 56. One golden spoon of ten *shekels*, full of incense: 57. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt-offering: 58. One kid of the goats for a sin-offering: 59. And for a sacrifice of peace-offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, five lambs of the first year. This was the offering of Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur. 60. ¶ On the ninth day Abidan the son of Gideoni, prince of the children of Benjamin, offered. 61. His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was an hundred and thirty *shekels*, a silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil, for a meat-offering: 62. One golden spoon of ten *shekels*, full of incense: 63. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt-offering: 64. One kid of the goats for a sin-offering. 65. And for a sacrifice of peace-offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, five lambs of the first year. This was the offering of Abidan, the son of Gideoni. 66. On the tenth day Ahiezer, the son of Ammishaddai, prince of the children of Dan offered. 67. His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was an hundred and thirty *shekels*, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil, for a meat-offering: 68. One golden spoon of ten *shekels*, full of incense: 69. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt-offering: 70. One kid of the goats for a sin-offering: 71. And for a sacrifice of peace-offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, five lambs of the first year. This was the offering of Ahiezer, the son of Ammishaddai. 72. ¶ On the eleventh day, Pagiel, the son of Ocran, prince of the children of Asher, offered. 73. His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was an hundred and thirty *shekels*, one silver bowl of seventy shekels after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil, for a meat-offering: 74. One golden spoon of ten *shekels*, full of incense: 75. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt-offering: 76. One kid of the goats for a sin-offering: 77. And for a sacrifice of peace-offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, five lambs of the first year. This was the offering of Pagiel, the son of Ocran. 78. ¶ On the twelfth day Ahira, the son of Enan, prince of the children of Naphtali, offered. 79. His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was an hundred and thirty *shekels*, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mingled

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mingled with oil, for a meat-offering: 80. One golden spoon of ten *shekels*, full of incense: 81. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt-offering: 82. One kid of the goats for a sin-offering. 83. And for a sacrifice of peace-offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, five lambs of the first year. This was the offering of Ahira, the son of Enan. 84. This was the dedication of the altar (in the day when it was anointed) by the princes of Israel: twelve chargers of silver, twelve silver bowls, twelve spoons of gold: 85. Each charger of silver weighing an hundred and thirty *shekels*, each bowl seventy: all the silver vessels weighed two thousand and four hundred *shekels* after the shekel of the sanctuary. 86. The golden spoons were twelve, full of incense, weighing ten *shekels* apiece, after the shekel of the sanctuary: all the gold of the spoons was an hundred and twenty *shekels*. 87. All the oxen for the burnt-offering were twelve bullocks, the rams twelve, the lambs of the first year twelve, with their meat-offering: and the kid of the goats for a sin-offering, twelve. 88. And all the oxen for the sacrifice of the peace-offerings, were twenty and four bullocks, the rams sixty, the he-goats sixty, the lambs of the first year sixty. This was the dedication of the altar, after that it was anointed. 89. And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation, to speak with him; then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy-seat, that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubims: and he spake unto him.

We have here an account of the great solemnity of dedicating the altars, both that of burnt-offerings, and that of incense; they had been sanctified before, when they were anointed, *Lev. viii. 10, 11.* but now they were hallowed, as it were, by the princes, with their free-will offerings. They began the use of them with rich presents, and great expressions of joy and gladness, and extraordinary respects to those tokens of God's presence with them. Now observe here, 1. That the princes and great men were first, and forwardest in the service of God. Those that are entitled to precedence should go before in good works, and that is true honour. That is an example to the nobility and gentry, those that are in authority, and of the first rank in their country; they ought to improve their honour and power, their estate and interest, for the promoting of religion, and the service of God, in the places where they live. It is justly expected, that they that have more than others, should do more good than others, with what they have, else they are unfaithful stewards, and will not make up their account with joy. Nay, great men must not only by their wealth and power assist and protect those that do serve God, but they must make conscience of being devout and religious themselves, and employing themselves in the exercises of piety, which will greatly redound to the honour of God, (*Psal. cxxxviii. 4, 5.*) and have a mighty good influence upon others, who will be the easier persuaded to the acts of devotion, when they see them thus brought into reputation. It is certain, the greatest of men is less than the least of the ordinances of God; nor are the meanest services of religion any disparagement to those that make the greatest figure in the world. 2. The offerings they brought were very rich and valuable; so rich, that some think there was not so great a difference in estate between them and others, as that they were able to bear the expence of them themselves, but that the heads of each tribe contributed to the offering which their prince brought. 1. They brought some things to remain for standing service; twelve large silver dishes, each about sixty ounces weight; as many large silver cups, or bowls, of about thirty-five ounces; the former to be used for the meat-offerings, the latter for the drink-offerings, the former for the flesh of the sacrifices, the latter for the blood. The altar was God's table (as it were) and it was fit so great a King should be served in a plate. The golden spoons being filled with incense, it is very likely were intended for the service of the golden altar, for both the altars were anointed at the same time. Note, In works of piety and charity, we ought to be generous according as our ability is. He that is the best, should be served with the best we have. The Israelites indeed might well afford to part with their gold and silver in abundance to the service of the sanctuary, for they needed it not to buy meat, and victual their camp, who were daily fed with bread from heaven; nor did they need it to buy bread, or pay their army, who were shortly to be put in possession of Canaan. 2. They brought some things to be used immediately, offerings of each sort, burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, and a great many peace-offerings, on part of which they were to feast with their friends; and the meat-offerings that were to be annexed to them. Hereby they signified their thankful acceptance of, and cheerful submission to, all those laws concerning the sacrifices, which God had lately by Moses delivered to them. And though it was a time of joy and rejoicing, yet it is observable, that still in the midst of their sacrifices we find a sin-offering; since in our best services we are conscious to ourselves that there is a mixture of sin, it is fit there should be even in our most joyful services a mixture of repentance. In all our approaches to God we must by faith have an eye to Christ as the great sin-offering, and make mention of him. 3. They brought their offerings each on a several day, in the order that they had lately been put into, so that the solemnity lasted twelve days. So God appointed, *ver. 11. They shall bring their offering each prince on his day, and so they did.* One sabbath must needs fall within the twelve days, if not two, but it should seem they did not intermit on the sabbath, for it was holy work, proper enough for a holy day. God appointed that it should thus be done on several days; (1.) That the solemnity might be prolonged, and so might be universally taken notice of by all Israel, and the remembrance of it more effectually preserved. (2.) That an equal honour might hereby be put upon each several tribe; in Aaron's breast-plate each had his precious stone, so in this offering each had his day. (3.) Thus it would be done more decently and in order; God's work should not be done confusedly, and in a hurry; take time, and we shall have done the sooner; or at least, we shall have done the better. (4.) God hereby signified how well pleased he is, and how well pleased we should be, with the exercises of piety and devotion. The repetition of them should be a continual pleasure to us, and we must not be weary of well doing. If extraordinary services come to be done for twelve

days together, we must not snuff at it, nor call it a task and a burden. (5.) The priests and Levites having this occasion to offer the same sacrifices, and those some of every sort, every day, for so many days together, would have their hands well set in, and would be well versed in the laws concerning them. (6.) The peace-offerings were all to be eaten the same day they were offered, and two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five lambs, were enough for one day's festival; had there been more, especially if all had been brought of a day, there might have been danger of excess. The virtue of temperance must not be left, under pretence of the religion of feasting. 4. All their offerings were exactly the same, without any variation, though it is probable the princes were not all alike rich, nor the tribes neither; but thus it was intimated, that all the tribes of Israel had an equal share in the altar, and an equal interest in the sacrifices that were offered upon it. Though one tribe was posted more honourably in the camp than another, yet they and their services were all alike acceptable to God. Nor must we have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect to persons, *Jam. ii. 1.* 5. Nahshon the prince of the tribe of Judah offered first, because God had given that tribe the first post of honour in the camp; and the rest of the tribes acquiesced, and offered in the same order that God had appointed them to encamp. Judah, of which tribe Christ came, first, and then the rest; thus, in the dedication of souls to God, every man is presented in his own order, *Christ the first fruits*, *1 Cor. xv. 23.* Some observe, that Nahshon is the only one that is not expressly called a prince, *ver. 12.* which the Jews give this account of; he is not called a prince, that he might not be puffed up because he offered first; and all the other are called princes, because they (though some of them of the elder house) submitted, and offered after him. Or, because the title of prince of Judah did more properly belong to Christ, for unto him shall the gathering of the people be. 6. Though the offerings were all the same, yet the account of them is repeated at large for each tribe, in the same words. We are sure there are no vain repetitions in scripture, what then shall we make of these repetitions? Might it not have served to say of this noble jury, that the same offering which their foreman brought, each on his day brought likewise? No, God would have it specified for each tribe: and why so? (1.) It was for the encouragement of these princes, and of their respective tribes, that each of their offerings being recorded at large, no slight might seem to be put upon any of them, for rich and poor meet together before God. (2.) It was for the encouragement of all generous acts of piety and charity, by letting us know that what is so given is lent to the Lord, and he carefully books it, with every one's name prefixed to his gift, because what is so given he will pay it again, and even a cup of cold water shall have its reward. He is not unrighteous, to forget either the cost or labour of love, *Heb. vi. 10.* We find Christ taking particular notice of what was cast into the treasury, *Mark xii. 41.* Though what is offered be but little, while it is according to our ability, though it be a contribution to the charity of others, yet it shall be recorded, that it may be recompensed in the resurrection of the just. 7. The sum total is added at the foot of the account, *ver. 84—88.* to shew how well pleased God was with the mention of his free-will offerings; and what a great deal it amounted to in the whole, when every prince brought in his quota; how greatly would the sanctuary of God be enriched and beautified, if all would in their places do their part towards it, by exemplary purity and devotion, extensive charity and universal usefulness! 8. God signified his gracious acceptance of these presents that were brought him, by speaking familiarly to Moses, as a man speak to his friend from off the mercy-seat, *ver. 89. Numb. xii. 8.* and in speaking to him, he did in effect speak to all Israel, shewing them this token of good, *Psal. ciii. 7.* Note, By this we may know that God hears and accepts our prayers, if he gives his grace to hear and receive his word, for thus our communion with him is maintained and kept up. I know not why we may not suppose that upon each of the days on which these offerings were brought, probably while the priests and offerers were feasting upon the peace-offerings, Moses was in the tabernacle receiving some of these laws and orders, which we have already met with in this and the foregoing book. And here the excellent Bishop Patrick observes, that God's speaking to Moses thus by an audible articulate voice, as if he had been clothed with a body, might be looked upon as an earnest of the incarnation of the Son of God in the fulness of time, when the word should be made flesh, and spake in the language of the sons of men. For however God at sundry times and in divers manners spake unto the fathers, he has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. And that he that now spake to Moses, as the *Shechinah*, or divine Majesty from between the cherubims, was the Eternal Word, the second person in the Trinity, was the pious conjecture of many of the ancients; for all God's communion with man is by his Son, by whom he made the world, and rules the Church, and who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

C · H A P. VIII.

This chapter is concerning the lamps or lights of the sanctuary, 1. The burning lamp in the candlestick, which the priests were charged to tend, *ver. 1—4.* 2. The living lamps, (if I may so call them) the Levites, who as ministers were burning and shining Lights. The ordination of the priests we had an account of *Lev. iii.* Here of the ordination of the Levites, the inferior clergy. (1.) How they were purified, *ver. 5—8.* 2. How they were parted with by the people, *ver. 9, 10.* 3. How they were presented to God in lieu of the first born, *ver. 11—18.* 4. How they were consigned to Aaron, and his sons, to be ministers to them, *ver. 19.* And how all these orders were duly executed, *ver. 20—22.* And lastly, the age appointed for their ministration, *ver. 22—26.*

1. **A**ND the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Speak unto Aaron, and say unto him, When thou lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick. 3. And Aaron did so; he lighted the lamps thereof, over against the candlestick; as the LORD commanded Moses. 4. And this work of the candlestick was of beaten gold, unto the shaft thereof, unto the flowers thereof, was beaten work: according unto the pattern which the LORD had shewed Moses, so he made the candlestick.

Directions were given long before this for the making of the golden candlestick, *Exod. xxv. 31.* and it was made according to the pattern shewed to Moses in the mount, *Exod. xxxvii. 17.* But now it was that the lamps were first ordered to be lighted, when other things began to be used. Observe, 1. Who must light the lamps, Aaron himself, he lighted the lamps. *ver.*

ver. 3. As the people's representative to God, he thus did the office of a servant in God's house, lighting his master's candle; as the representative of God to the people, he thus gave them the significations of God's will and favour, which is thus expressed, *Psal. xviii. 28. Thou wilt light my candle;* and thus Aaron himself was now lately directed to bless the people, *The Lord make his face to shine upon thee,* chap. vi. 25. The commandment is a lamp, *Prov. vi. 23. The scripture is a light shining in a dark place,* 2 Pet. i. 19. And a dark place indeed even the Church would be without it, as the tabernacle without the lamps, for it had no window in it. Now the work of ministers is to light these lamps, by expounding and applying the word of God. The priest lighted the middle lamp from the fire of the altar, and the rest of the lamps he lighted one from another which (saith Mr. Ainsworth) signifieth that the fountain of all light and knowledge cometh from Christ, who has the *seven spirits of God* figured by the *seven lamps of fire*, *Rev. iv. 5.* But that in the expounding of scripture, one passage must borrow light from another. He also supposeth, that *seven* being a number of perfection, by the seven branches of the candlestick is shewed the full perfection of the scriptures, which are able to make us wise to salvation. 2. To what end the lamps were lighted, that they might give light *over against the candlestick*, i. e. to that part of the tabernacle where the table stood, with the shew-bread upon it over against the candlestick. They were not lighted like tapers in an urn, to burn to themselves, but to give light to the other side of the tabernacle, for therefore candles are lighted, *Math. v. 15.* Note, The lights of the world, the lights of the Church, must shine as lights. Therefore we have light, that we may give light.

5. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 6. Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them. 7. And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean. 8. Then let them take a young bullock with his meat-offering, even fine flour mingled with oil, and another young bullock shalt thou take for a sin-offering. 9. And thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation; and thou shalt gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together: 10. And thou shalt bring the Levites before the LORD, and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites: 11. And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD, for an offering of the children of Israel; that they may execute the service of the LORD. 12. And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks; and thou shalt offer the one for a sin-offering, and the other for a burnt-offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for the Levites. 13. And thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto the LORD. 14. Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine. 15. And after that, shall the Levites go in, to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them for an offering. 16. For they are wholly given unto me, from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the first-born of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me. 17. For all the first-born of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every first-born in the land of Egypt, I sanctified them for myself. 18. And I have taken the Levites for all the first-born of the children of Israel. 19. And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons, from among the children of Israel; to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel, that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary. 20. And Moses and Aaron, and all the congregation of the children of Israel did to the Levites according unto all that the LORD commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did the children of Israel unto them. 21. And the Levites were purified, and they washed their clothes: and Aaron offered them as an offering before the LORD; and Aaron made an atonement for them to cleanse them. 22. And after that went the Levites in, to do their service in the tabernacle of the congregation before Aaron and before his sons: as the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did they unto them. 23. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 24. This is it that belongeth unto the Levites: from twenty and five years old and upward, they shall go in to wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: 25. And from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting upon the service thereof, and shall serve no more: 26. But shall minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of the congregation, to keep the charge, and shall do no service: Thus shalt thou do unto the Levites touching their charge.

We read before of the separating of the Levites from among the children of Israel, when they were numbered, and the numbering of them by them-

selves. chap. iii. 6—15. that they might be employed in the service of the tabernacle. Now here we have directions given for their solemn ordination, ver. 6. and the performance of it, ver. 20. All Israel must know that they took not this honour to themselves, but were called of God to it; nor was it enough that they were distinguished from their neighbours, but they must be solemnly devoted to God. Note, All that are employed for God must be dedicated to him, according as the degree of the employment is. Christians must be baptized, ministers must be ordained; we must first give our ourselves unto the Lord, and then our services. Observe in what method this was done: 1. The Levites must be cleansed, and were so. The rites and ceremonies of their cleansing were to be performed, (1.) By themselves. They must wash their clothes, and not only bathe, but shave all their flesh, as the leper was to do when he was cleansed, *Lev. xiv. 8.* They must cause a razor to pass over all their flesh, to clear themselves from that defilement which would not wash off. Jacob, whom God loved, was a smooth man; it was Esau that was hairy. The great pains they were to take with themselves to make themselves clean, teacheth all Christians, and ministers particularly, by repentance and mortification, to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, that they may perfect holiness. They must be clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. (2.) By Moles. He must sprinkle the water of purifying upon them, which was prepared by divine direction. This signified the application of the blood of Christ to our souls by faith, for the purifying of us from an evil conscience; that we may be fit to serve the living God. It is our duty to cleanse ourselves, and God's promise that he will cleanse us. 2. The Levites being thus prepared, must be brought before the Lord in a solemn assembly of all Israel, and the children of Israel must put their hands upon them, ver. 10. So transferring their interest in them and in their service, (to which as of a part, the whole body of the people was entitled) to God and to his sanctuary. They presented them to God as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable, to perform a reasonable service; and therefore as the offerers in all other cases did, they laid their hands upon them, desiring that their service might be accepted in lieu of the attendance of the whole congregation, particularly the first-born, which they acknowledge God might have insisted on. This will not serve to prove a power in the people to ordain ministers; for this imposition of hands by the children of Israel upon the Levites did not make them ministers of the sanctuary, but only signified the peoples parting with that tribe out of their militia, and civil incorporations, in order to their being made ministers by Aaron, who was to offer them before the Lord. All the congregation of the children of Israel could not lay hands on them, but it is probable the rulers and elders did as the representative body of the people. Some think the first-born did it, because in their stead the Levites were consecrated to God. Whatever God calls for from us to serve his own glory by, we must cheerfully resign it; lay our hands upon it, not to detain it but to surrender it, and let it go to him that is intitled to it. 3. Sacrifices were to be offered for them; a sin-offering first ver. 12. and then a burnt-offering to make an atonement for the Levites, who as the parties concerned, were to lay their hands upon the head of the sacrifices. See here, (1.) That we are all utterly unworthy and unfit to be admitted into, and employed in, the service of God, till atonement be made for sin, and thereby our peace made with God. That interposing cloud must be scattered, before there can be any comfortable communion settled between God and our souls. (2.) That it is by sacrifice, by Christ the great sacrifice, that we are reconciled to God, and made fit to be offered to him. It is by him that Christians are sanctified to the work of their Christianity, and ministers to the work of their ministry. The learned Bishop Patrick's notion of the sacrifice offered by the Levites is, that the Levites were themselves considered as an expiatory sacrifice, for they were given to make atonement for the children of Israel, ver. 19. And yet not being devoted to death, no more than the first-born were, these two sacrifices were substituted in their stead, upon which therefore they were to lay their hands, that their sin which the children of Israel laid upon them, ver. 10. might be transferred to these beasts. 4. The Levites themselves were offered before the Lord for an offering of the children of Israel, ver. 11. Aaron gave them up to God, as being first given up by themselves, and by the children of Israel. The original word signifies a wave offering, not that they were actually waved, but they were presented to God as the God of heaven, and the Lord of the whole earth, as the wave-offerings were. And in calling them wave-offerings, it was intimated to them, that they must continually lift up themselves towards God in his service, lift up their eyes, lift up their hearts, and must move to and fro with readiness in the business of their profession. They were not ordained to be idle, but to be active and stirring. 5. God here declares his acceptance of them, ver. 14. The Levites shall be mine. God took them instead of the first-born, ver. 16. 17. 18. of which before, chap. iii. 41. Note, What is in sincerity offered to God, shall be graciously owned and accepted by him. And his ministers who have obtained mercy of him to be faithful, have particular marks of favour and honour put upon them; they shall be mine, and then, ver. 15. they shall go in to do the service of the tabernacle. God takes them for his own, that they might serve him. All that expect to share in the privileges of the tabernacle, must resolve to do the service of the tabernacle. As on the one hand, none of God's creatures are his necessary servants, he needs not the service of any of them; so on the other hand, none are taken merely as honorary servants, to do nothing. All whom God owns he employs, angels themselves have their services. 6. They are then given as a gift to Aaron and his sons, ver. 19. yet so as that the benefit accrued to the children of Israel. (1.) The Levites must act under the priests as attendants on them, and assistants to them, in the service of the sanctuary. Aaron offers them to God, ver. 11. and then God gives them back to Aaron, ver. 19. Note, Whatever we give up to God, he will give it back to us unspeakably to our advantage. Our hearts, our children, our estates, are never more ours, more truly, more comfortably ours, then when we have offered them up to God. (2.) They must act for the people. They were taken to do the service of the children of Israel, i. e. not only to do the service which they should do, but to serve their interests, and do that which would really redound to the honour, safety and prosperity of the whole nation. Note, They that faithfully perform the service of God, do one of the best services that can be done to the public; God's ministers while they keep within the sphere of their office, and conscientiously discharge the duty of it, must be looked upon as some of the most useful servants of their country. The children of Israel can as ill spare the tribe of Levi as any of their tribes. But what is the service they do the children of Israel? It follows, it is to make an atonement for them, that there be no plague among them. It was the priests' work to make atonement by sacrifice, but the Levites made atonement by attendance, and preserved the peace with heaven, which was made by sacrifice. If the service of the priests in the tabernacle had been left to all the first-born of Israel promiscuously, either it would have been neglected, or done unskillfully and irreverently, being done by those that were neither so closely tied to it, nor so diligently trained up to it, nor so constantly used to it, as the Levites were; and this would bring a plague among the children of Israel: meaning perhaps the death of the first-born themselves, which was the last and greatest of the plagues of Egypt. To prevent this, and to preserve the atonement, the Levites were appointed to do this service, who

who should be bred up to it under their parents, from their infancy, and therefore would be well versed in it: and so the children of Israel, i. e. the first-born should not need to come nigh to the sanctuary; or, when any Israelite had occasion, the Levites should be ready to instruct them, and introduce them, and so prevent any fatal miscarriage or mistake. Note, It is a very great kindness to the Church, that ministers are appointed to go before them in the things of God, as guides, overseers, and rulers, in religious worship, and to make that their business. When Christ ascended on high, he gave these gifts, Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12. 7. The time of their ministration is fixed. (1.) They were to enter upon the service at twenty-five years old, ver. 24. They were not charged with the carrying of the tabernacle, and the utensils of it till they were thirty years old, chap. iv. 3. But they were entered to be otherwise serviceable at twenty-five years old; a very good age for ministers to begin their public work at. The work then required that strength of body, and the work now requires that maturity of judgment, and stayedness of behaviour, which men rarely arrive at till about that age: and novices are in danger of being lifted up with pride. (2.) They were to have a writ of ease at fifty years old; then they were to return from the warfare, as the phrase is, ver. 25. not cashiered with disgrace, but preferred rather to the rest which their age required, to be loaded with the honours of their office, as hitherto they had been with the burdens of it. They shall minister with their brethren in the tabernacle, to direct the junior Levites, and let them in, and they shall keep the charge, as guards upon the avenues of the tabernacle, to see that no stranger intruded, nor any person in his uncleanness, but they shall not be put upon any service, which may be a fatigue to them. If God's grace provide that men shall have ability according to their work, man's prudence should take care, that men have work but according to their ability. The aged are most fit for trusts, and to keep the charge, the younger are most fit for work, and to do the service. Those that have used the office of a servant well, purchase to themselves a good degree, 1 Tim. iii. 13. Yet indeed gifts are not tied to ages, Job xxxii. 9. but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit. Thus was the affair of the Levites settled.

C H A P. IX.

This chapter is, 1. Concerning the great ordinance of the passover; (1.) Orders given for the observance of it, at the return of the year, ver. 1—4. (2.) Provisions added, what shall be done with those that were ceremonially unclean, or otherwise disabled, at the time when the passover was to be kept, ver. 6—14. 2. Concerning the great favour of the pillar of cloud, which was a guide to Israel through the wilderness, ver. 15—23.

1. **AND** the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year, after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, 2. Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season. 3. In the fourteenth day of this month at even, ye shall keep it in his appointed season; according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof shall ye keep it. 4. And Moses spake unto the children of Israel that they should keep the passover. 5. And they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at even, in the wilderness of Sinai: according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel. 6. ¶ And there were certain men who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day. 7. And those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the LORD in his appointed season among the children of Israel? 8. And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the LORD will command concerning you. 9. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 10. Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey, afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto the LORD. 11. The fourteenth day of the second month at even, they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. 12. They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the passover, they shall keep it. 13. But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the passover; even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people, because he brought not the offering of the LORD in his appointed season: that man shall bear his sin. 14. And if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the passover unto the LORD, according to the ordinance of the passover and according to the manner thereof, so shall he do: ye shall have one ordinance both for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land.

Here is, 1. An order given for the solemnizing of the passover, that day twelve-month alter they came out of Egypt, on the fourteenth day of the first month of the second year, some days before they were numbered, for that was done in the beginning of the second month. Observe, (1.) God gave particular orders for the keeping of this passover; otherwise (it should seem) they had not kept it; for in the first institution of this ordinance it was appointed to be kept when they should come into the land of promise, Exod. xii. 25. And for ought appears, after this they kept no passover till they came to Canaan, Josh. v. 10. This was an early indication of the abolishing of the ceremonial institutions at last, that so soon after they were

first appointed, some of them were suffered to lie asleep for so many years. The ordinance of the Lord's supper (which came in the room of the passover) was not thus intermitted or set aside, in the first days of the Christian Church, though those were days of greater difficulty and distress than Israel knew in the wilderness; nay, in the times of persecution the Lord's supper was celebrated more frequently than afterwards. The Israelites in the wilderness could not forget their deliverance out of Egypt, their present state was a constant memorandum of it to them, all the danger was when they came to Canaan, there therefore they had need to be minded of the rock out of which they were hewn. However, because the first passover was celebrated in a hurry, and was rather the substance itself than the sign, it was the will of God that at the return of the year, when they were more composed, and better acquainted with the divine law, they should observe it again, that their children might more distinctly understand the solemnity, and the better remember it hereafter. Calvin supposeth they were obliged to keep it now, and notes it as an instance of their carelessness, that they had need to be minded of an institution they so lately received. (2.) Moses faithfully transmitted to the people the orders given him, ver. 4. Thus St. Paul delivered to the Churches what he received of the Lord concerning the gospel-passover, 1 Cor. xi. 23. Note, Magistrates must be monitors, and ministers must stir up men's minds by way of remembrance to that which is good. (3.) The people observed the orders given them, ver. 5. Though they had lately kept the feast of dedication, Lev. viii. yet they did not desire to excuse themselves with that from keeping this feast. Note, Extraordinary performances must not supersede or jostle out our stated services. They kept the passover even in the wilderness; though our condition be solitary and unsettled, yet we must keep up our attendance on God by holy ordinances and opportunity, for in them we may find the best conversation, and the best repose. Thus is God's Israel provided for in a desert. 2. Instructions given concerning those that were ceremonially unclean, when they were to eat the passover. The law of the passover required every Israelite to eat of it, some subsequent laws had forbidden those that had contracted any ceremonial pollution to eat of the holy things; those whose minds and consciences are defiled by sin, are utterly unfit for communion with God, and cannot partake of any true comfort in the gospel-passover, till they are cleansed by true repentance and faith; and a sad dilemma they are in; if they come not to holy ordinances, they are guilty of a contempt of them; if they do come in their pollution, they are guilty of a profanation of them. They must therefore wash, and then compass God's altar.

Now, 1. Here is the case that happened in Israel when this passover was to be kept. Certain men were defiled by the dead body of a man, ver. 6. and they lay under the defilement seven days, Numb. xix. 11. and in that time might not eat of the holy things, Lev. vii. 20. This was not their iniquity, but their infelicity; some or other must touch dead bodies, to bury them out of sight, and therefore they could, with the better grace, bring their complaint to Moses. 2. The application made to Moses by the persons concerned, ver. 7. Note, It is people's wisdom in difficult cases concerning sin and duty, to consult with their ministers whom God has set over them and to ask the law at their mouth, Mal. ii. 7. These means we must use in pursuance of our prayers to God to lead us in a plain path. It is observable, with what trouble and concern these men complain, that they were kept back from offering to the Lord. They did not complain of the law as unjust, but lamented their unhappiness, that they fell under the restraint of it at this time, and desired some expedient might be found out for their relief. Note, It is a blessed sight to see people hungering and thirsting after God's ordinances, and to hear them complaining of that which prevents their enjoyment of them. It should be a trouble to us, when by any occasion we are kept back from bringing our offering, in the solemnities of a sabbath or a sacrament, as it was to David, when he was banished from the altar, Psal. xlii. 1, 2. 3. The deliberation of Moses in resolving this case, here seemed to be law against law, and though it is a rule that the latter law must explain the former, yet he pitied these Israelites that were thus debarred the privilege of the passover; and therefore took time to consult the oracles, and to know what was the mind of God in this case, ver. 8. *I will hear what the Lord will command concerning you.* Ministers must take example from hence in resolving cases of conscience. (1.) They must not determine rashly, but take time to consider, that every circumstance may be duly weighed, the case viewed in a true light, and spiritual things compared with spiritual. (2.) They must ask counsel at God's mouth, and not determine according to the bias of their own fancy or affection, but impartially according to the mind of God, to the best of their knowledge. We have now no such oracle to consult as Moses had, but we must have recourse to the law and the testimony, and speak according to that rule; and if in difficult cases, we take time to spread the matter in particular before God, by a humble believing prayer, we have reason to hope that Spirit which is promised to lead us into all truth, shall direct us to direct others in the good and the right way. 4. The directions which God gave in this case, and in other the like cases, explanatory of the law of the passover. This ill accident produced good laws. 1. Those that happened to be ceremonially unclean at the time when the passover should be eaten, were allowed to eat it that day month when they were clean; so were those that happened to be in a journey, afar off, ver. 10, 11. See here, (1.) That when we are to attend upon God in solemn ordinances, it is very necessary both that we be clean, and that we be composed. (2.) That that may excuse the deferring of a duty for a time, which yet will not justify us in the total neglect and omission of it. He that is at variance with his brother may leave his gift before the altar, while he goes to be reconciled to his brother; but when he has done his part towards it, whether it be effected or no, he must come again and offer his gift, Matth. v. 23, 24. This secondary passover was to be kept on the same day of the month with the first, because the ordinance was a memorial of their deliverance on that day of the month. Once we find the whole congregation keeping the passover, on this fourteenth day of the second month, in Hezekiah's time, 2 Chron. xxx. 15. which perhaps may help to account for the admission of some that were not clean to the eating of it; had the general passover been kept in the first month, the unclean might have been put off till the second; but that being kept in the second month, they had no warrant to eat it in the third month; and therefore rather than not eat of it at all, they were admitted though not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary, ver. 19, 20. 2. When the passover was eating in the second month, all the rites and ceremonies of it must be strictly observed, ver. 12. They must not think, that, because the time was dispensed with, any part of the solemnity of it might be abated; no, when we cannot do as we would, we must do the utmost we can, in the service of God. 3. This allowance in a case of necessity should by no means countenance or indulge any in their neglect to keep the passover at the time appointed, when they were not under that necessity, ver. 13. He that is under no incapacity to eat the passover in the appointed time, if he neglected it then upon the presumption of the liberty granted by this law, he puts an affront upon God, impiously abuseth his kindness, and he shall certainly bear his sin, and be cut off from his people. Note, As those who against their minds are forced to absent from God's ordinances may comfortably expect the favours of God's

God's grace under their affliction; so those who of choice absent themselves, may justly expect the tokens of God's wrath for their sin. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.* 4. Here is a clause added in favour of strangers, *ver. 14.* Though it was requisite that the stranger, who would join with them in eating the passover, should be circumcised as a proselyte to their religion, *Exod. xii. 48, 49.* yet this kind admission of those who were not native Israelites to eat the passover, was an intimation of the favour designed for the poor Gentiles by Christ. As then there was one law, so in the days of the Messiah there should be one gospel for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land; for *in every nation he that feareth God and works righteousness, is accepted of him,* and this was a truth before Peter perceived it, *Acts x. 34, 35.*

15. ¶ And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, *namely,* the tent of the testimony: and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning. 16. So it was alway: the cloud covered it *by day,* and the appearance of fire by night. 17. And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle; then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. 18. At the commandment of the LORD the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the LORD they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle, they rested in their tents. 19. And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the LORD, and journeyed not. 20. And so it was when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle: according to the commandment of the LORD they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the LORD they journeyed. 21. And so it was when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and *that* the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether *it was* by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed: 22. Or *whether it were* two days, or a month, or a year that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed. 23. At the commandment of the LORD they rested in their tents, and at the commandment of the LORD they journeyed: they kept the charge of the LORD at the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

We have here the history of the cloud; not a natural history, *who knows the balancings of the clouds?* but a divine history, of a cloud that was appointed to be the visible sign and symbol of God's presence with Israel. 1. When the tabernacle was finished, this cloud, which before had hung on high over their camp, settled upon the tabernacle, and covered it, to shew that God manifests his presence with his people in and by his ordinances; there he makes himself known, and to them we must look, if we would see the beauty of the Lord, *Ezek. xxxvii. 26, 27.* Thus God owned his own appointments, and signified his acceptance of his people's love and obedience. 2. That which appeared as a cloud by day, appeared as a fire by night; had it been a cloud only, it had not been visible by night; and had it been a fire only, it would have been scarce discernible by day; but God would give them sensible demonstrations of the constancy of his presence with them, and his care of them, and that he kept them night and day, *Ia. xxvii. 5.* Psalm cxxi. 6. And thus we are taught to *jet God always before us,* and to see him near us both night and day. Something of the nature of that divine revelation which the Old Testament Church was governed by, might also be signified by these visible signs of God's presence, the cloud noting the darkness, and the fire the terror of that dispensation, in comparison with the more clear and comfortable discoveries God has made of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. 3. This pillar of cloud and fire directed and determined all the motions, marches, and encampments of Israel in the wilderness. (1.) As long as the cloud rested upon the tabernacle, so long they continued in the same place, and never stirred; though no doubt they were very desirous to be pressing forward in their journey towards Canaan, where they longed to be and hoped to be quickly, yet as long as the cloud rested, if it were a month, or a year, so long they rested, *ver. 22.* Note, He that believeth doth not make haste. There is no time lost, while we are waiting God's time. It is as acceptable a piece of submission to the will of God to sit still contentedly when our lot requires it, as to work for him when we are called to it. (2.) When the cloud was taken up, they removed, how comfortably soever they were encamped, *ver. 17.* Whether it moved by day or night, they delayed not to attend its motions, *ver. 21.* and probably there were some appointed to stand sentinel day and night within ken of it, to give timely notice to the camp of its beginning to stir, and this is called keeping the charge of the Lord. The people being thus kept at a constant uncertainty, and having no time fixt for their stays and removes, were obliged to hold themselves in a constant readiness to march upon very short warning. And for the same reason we are kept at uncertainty, concerning the time of our putting off the earthly house of this tabernacle, that we may be always ready to remove, at the commandment of the Lord. (3.) As long and as far as the cloud moved, so long and so far they marched, and just there were it abode, they pitched their tents about it, and God's tent under it, *ver. 17.* Note, It is uncomfortable staying when God is departed, but very safe and pleasant going, when we see God go before us, and resting where he appoints us to rest. This is repeated again and again in these verses, because it was a constant miracle, and oft repeated, and what never failed in all their travels, and because it is a matter which we should take particular notice of as very significant and instructive. It is mentioned long after by David, *Psal. cv. 39.* and by the people of God after their captivity, *Neh. ix. 19.* And the conduct of this cloud is spoken of as signifying the guidance of the blessed Spirit, *Ia. lxiii. 14.* The Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest, and so didst thou lead thy people.

This teacheth us, 1. The particular care God takes of his people. No. XXII.

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CHAP. X.

In this chapter we have, 1. Orders given about the making and using of silver trumpets, which seems to have been the last of all the commandments God gave upon mount Sinai, and one of the least, yet not without its significance, *ver. 1—10.* 2. The history of the removal of Israel's camp from mount Sinai, and their orderly march into the wilderness of Paran, *ver. 11—28.* 3. Moses's treaty with Hobab, his brother-in-law, *ver. 29—32.* 4. Moses's prayer at the removing and resting of the ark, *ver. 33—36.*

1. AND the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps. 3. And when they shall blow with them all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 4. And if they blow but with one trumpet, then the princes which are heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee. 5. When ye blow an alarm, then the camps that lie on the east parts, shall go forward. 6. When ye blow an alarm the second time, then the camps that lie on the south-side shall take their journey: they shall blow an alarm for their journeys. 7. But when the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow; but ye shall not sound an alarm. 8. And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance for ever throughout your generations. 9. And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you; then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets, and ye shall be remembered before the LORD your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies. 10. Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt-offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace-offerings: that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God.

We have here directions concerning the public notices that were to be given to the people upon several occasions by sound of trumpet. In a thing of this nature one would think Moses needed not to have been taught of God, his own reason might teach him the conveniency of trumpets; but their constitution was to be in every thing divine, and therefore even in this matter, as small as it seems. Moses is here directed, 1. About the making of them. They must be made of silver, not cast, but of beaten work, (as some read it) the matter and shape, no doubt, very fit for that purpose. He was now ordered to make but two, because there were but two priests to use them. But in Solomon's time we read of a hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets, 2 Chron. v. 12. The form of these trumpets is supposed to be much like ours at this day. 2. Who were to make use of them, not any inferior person, but the priests themselves, the sons of Aaron, *ver. 8.* As great as they were, they must not think it a disparagement to them to be trumpeters in the house of God: the meanest office there was honourable. This signified, that the Lord's ministers should lift up their voice like a trumpet, to shew people their sins, *Ia. lviii. 1.* and to call them to Christ, *Ia. xxvii. 13.* 3. Upon what occasions the trumpets were to be sounded. 1. For the calling of assemblies, *ver. 2.* Thus they are bid to blow the trumpet in Zion, for the calling of a solemn assembly together, to sanctify a fast, *Joel ii. 13.* Public notice ought to be given of the time and place of religious assemblies for the invitation to the benefit of ordinances in general, *whoever will let him come.* Wisdom cries in the chief places of concourse. But that the trumpet might not give an uncertain sound, they are directed, if only the princes and elders were to meet, to blow only one of the trumpets; lest should serve to call them together, who ought to be examples of forwardness in any thing that is good: but if the body of the people were to be called together, both the trumpets must be sounded, that they might be the further heard. In allusion to this, they are said to be blessed

who should be bred up to it under their parents, from their infancy, and therefore would be well versed in it: and so the children of Israel, *i. e.* the first-born should not need to come nigh to the sanctuary; or, when any Israelite had occasion, the Levites should be ready to instruct them, and introduce them, and so prevent any fatal miscarriage or mistake. Note, It is a very great kindness to the Church, that ministers are appointed to go before them in the things of God, as guides, overseers, and rulers, in religious worship, and to make that their business. When Christ ascended on high, he gave these gifts, Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12. 7. The time of their ministrations is fixed. (1.) They were to enter upon the service at twenty-five years old, *ver.* 24. They were not charged with the carrying of the tabernacle, and the utensils of it till they were thirty years old, *chap.* iv. 3. But they were entered to be otherwise serviceable at twenty-five years old; a very good age for ministers to begin their public work at. The work then required that strength of body, and the work now requires that maturity of judgment, and stayedness of behaviour, which men rarely arrive at till about that age; and novices are in danger of being lifted up with pride. (2.) They were to have a writ of ease at fifty years old; then they were to return from the warfare, as the phrase is, *ver.* 25, not cashiered with disgrace, but preferred rather to the rest which their age required, to be loaded with the honours of their office, as hitherto they had been with the burdens of it. They shall minister with their brethren in the tabernacle, to direct the junior Levites, and set them in, and they shall keep the charge, as guards upon the avenues of the tabernacle, to see that no stranger intruded, nor any person in his uncleanness, but they shall not be put upon any service, which may be a fatigue to them. If God's grace provide that men shall have ability according to their work, man's prudence should take care, that men have work but according to their ability. The aged are most fit for trusts, and to keep the charge, the younger are most fit for work, and to do the service. Those that have used the office of a servant well, purchase to themselves a good degree, 1 Tim. iii. 13. Yet indeed gifts are not tied to ages, Job xxxii. 9. but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit. Thus was the affair of the Levites settled.

C H A P. IX.

This chapter is, 1. Concerning the great ordinance of the passover; (1.) Orders given for the observance of it, at the return of the year, *ver.* 1—4. (2.) Provisions added, what shall be done with those that were ceremonially unclean, or otherwise disabled, at the time when the passover was to be kept, *ver.* 6—14. 2. Concerning the great favour of the pillar of cloud, which was a guide to Israel through the wilderness, *ver.* 15—23.

1. **A**ND the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year, after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, 2. Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season. 3. In the fourteenth day of this month at even, ye shall keep it in his appointed season; according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof shall ye keep it. 4. And Moses spake unto the children of Israel that they should keep the passover. 5. And they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at even, in the wilderness of Sinai: according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel. 6. ¶ And there were certain men who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day. 7. And those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore have we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the LORD in his appointed season among the children of Israel? 8. And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the LORD will command concerning you. 9. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 10. Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey, afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto the LORD. 11. The fourteenth day of the second month at even, they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. 12. They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the passover, they shall keep it. 13. But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the passover; even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people, because he brought not the offering of the LORD in his appointed season: that man shall bear his sin. 14. And if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the passover unto the LORD, according to the ordinance of the passover and according to the manner thereof, so shall he do: ye shall have one ordinance both for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land.

Here is, 1. An order given for the solemnizing of the passover, that day twelve-month after they came out of Egypt, on the fourteenth day of the first month of the second year, some days before they were numbered, for that was done in the beginning of the second month. Observe, (1.) God gave particular orders for the keeping of this passover; otherwise (it should seem) they had not kept it; for in the first institution of this ordinance it was appointed to be kept when they should come into the land of promise, Exod. xii. 25. And for ought appears, after this they kept no passover and they came to Canaan, *Josh.* v. 10. This was an early indication of the abolishing of the ceremonial institutions at last, that so soon after they were

first appointed, some of them were suffered to lie asleep for so many years. The ordinance of the Lord's supper (which came in the room of the passover) was not thus intermitted or set aside, in the first days of the Christian Church, though those were days of greater difficulty and distress than Israel knew in the wilderness; nay, in the times of persecution the Lord's supper was celebrated more frequently than afterwards. The Israelites in the wilderness could not forget their deliverance out of Egypt, their present state was a constant memorandum of it to them, all the danger was when they came to Canaan, there therefore they had need to be minded of the rock out of which they were hewn. However, because the first passover was celebrated in a hurry, and was rather the substance itself than the sign, it was the will of God that at the return of the year, when they were more composed, and better acquainted with the divine law, they should observe it again, that their children might more distinctly understand the solemnity, and the better remember it hereafter. Calvin supposeth they were obliged to keep it now, and notes it as an instance of their carelessness, that they had need to be minded of an institution they so lately received. (2.) Moses faithfully transmitted to the people the orders given him, *ver.* 4. Thus St. Paul delivered to the Churches what he received of the Lord concerning the gospel-passover, 1 Cor. xi. 23. Note, Magistrates must be monitors, and ministers must stir up men's minds by way of remembrance to that which is good. (3.) The people observed the orders given them, *ver.* 5. Though they had lately kept the feast of dedication, *Lev.* viii. yet they did not desire to excuse themselves with that from keeping this feast. Note, Extraordinary performances must not supersede or jostle out our stated services. They kept the passover even in the wilderness; though our condition be solitary and unsettled, yet we must keep up our attendance on God by holy ordinances and opportunity, for in them we may find the best conversation, and the best repose. Thus is God's Israel provided for in a desert. 2. Instructions given concerning those that were ceremonially unclean, when they were to eat the passover. The law of the passover required every Israelite to eat of it, some subsequent laws had forbidden those that had contracted any ceremonial pollution to eat of the holy things; those whose minds and consciences are defiled by sin, are utterly unfit for communion with God, and cannot partake of any true comfort in the gospel-passover, till they are cleansed by true repentance and faith; and a sad dilemma they are in; if they come not to holy ordinances, they are guilty of a contempt of them; if they do come in their pollution, they are guilty of a profanation of them. They must therefore wash, and then compass God's altar.

Now, 1. Here is the case that happened in Israel when this passover was to be kept. Certain men were defiled by the dead body of a man, *ver.* 6. and they lay under the defilement seven days, *Numb.* xix. 11. and in that time might not eat of the holy things, *Lev.* vii. 20. This was not their iniquity, but their infelicity; some or other must touch dead bodies, to bury them out of sight, and therefore they could, with the better grace, bring their complaint to Moses. 2. The application made to Moses by the persons concerned, *ver.* 7. Note, It is people's wisdom in difficult cases concerning sin and duty, to consult with their ministers whom God has set over them and to ask the law at their mouth, *Mal.* ii. 7. These means we must use in pursuance of our prayers to God to lead us in a plain path. It is observable, with what trouble and concern these men complain, that they were kept back from offering to the Lord. They did not complain of the law as unjust, but lamented their unhappiness, that they fell under the restraint of it at this time, and desired some expedient might be found out for their relief. Note, It is a blessed sight to see people hungering and thirsting after God's ordinances, and to hear them complaining of that which prevents their enjoyment of them. It should be a trouble to us, when by any occasion we are kept back from bringing our offering, in the solemnities of a sabbath or a sacrament, as it was to David, when he was banished from the altar, *Psal.* xlii. 1, 2. 3. The deliberation of Moses in resolving this case, here seemed to be law against law, and though it is a rule that the latter law must explain the former, yet he pitied these Israelites that were thus debarred the privilege of the passover; and therefore took time to consult the oracles, and to know what was the mind of God in this case, *ver.* 8. I will hear what the Lord will command concerning you. Ministers must take example from hence in resolving cases of conscience. (1.) They must not determine rashly, but take time to consider, that every circumstance may be duly weighed, the case viewed in a true light, and spiritual things compared with spiritual. (2.) They must ask counsel at God's mouth, and not determine according to the bias of their own fancy or affection, but impartially according to the mind of God, to the best of their knowledge. We have now no such oracle to consult as Moses had, but we must have recourse to the law and the testimony, and speak according to that rule; and if in difficult cases, we take time to spread the matter in particular before God, by a humble believing prayer, we have reason to hope that Spirit which is promised to lead us into all truth, shall direct us to direct others in the good and the right way. 4. The directions which God gave in this case, and in other the like cases, explanatory of the law of the passover. This ill accident produced good laws. 1. Those that happened to be ceremonially unclean at the time when the passover should be eaten, were allowed to eat it that day month when they were clean; so were those that happened to be in a journey, afar off, *ver.* 10, 11. See here, (1.) That when we are to attend upon God in solemn ordinances, it is very necessary both that we be clean, and that we be composed. (2.) That that may excuse the deferring of a duty for a time, which yet will not justify us in the total neglect and omission of it. He that is at variance with his brother may leave his gift before the altar, while he goes to be reconciled to his brother; but when he has done his part towards it, whether it be effected or no, he must come again and offer his gift, *Matth.* v. 23, 24. This secondary passover was to be kept on the same day of the month with the first, because the ordinance was a memorial of their deliverance on that day of the month. Once we find the whole congregation keeping the passover, on this fourteenth day of the second month, in Hezekiah's time, 2 Chron. xxx. 15. which perhaps may help to account for the admission of some that were not clean to the eating of it; had the general passover been kept in the first month, the unclean might have been put off till the second; but that being kept in the second month, they had no warrant to eat it in the third month; and therefore rather than not eat of it at all, they were admitted though not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary, *ver.* 19, 20. 2. When the passover was eating in the second month, all the rites and ceremonies of it must be strictly observed, *ver.* 12. They must not think, that, because the time was dispensed with, any part of the solemnity of it might be abated; no, when we cannot do as we would, we must do the utmost we can, in the service of God. 3. This allowance in a case of necessity should by no means countenance or indulge any in their neglect to keep the passover at the time appointed, when they were not under that necessity, *ver.* 13. He that is under no incapacity to eat the passover in the appointed time, if he neglected it then upon the presumption of the liberty granted by this law, he puts an affront upon God, impiously abuseth his kindness, and he shall certainly bear his sin, and be cut off from his people. Note, As those who against their minds are forced to absent from God's ordinances may comfortably expect the favours of

God's grace under their affliction; so those who of choice absent themselves, may justly expect the tokens of God's wrath for their sin. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.* 4. Here is a clause added in favour of strangers, *ver. 14.* Though it was requisite that the stranger, who would join with them in eating the passover, should be circumcised as a proselyte to their religion, *Exod. xii. 48, 49.* yet this kind admission of those who were not native Israelites to eat the passover, was an intimation of the favour designed for the poor Gentiles by Christ. As then there was one law, so in the days of the Messiah there should be one gospel for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land; for *in every nation he that feareth God and works righteousness, is accepted of him,* and this was a truth before Peter perceived it, *Acts x. 34, 35.*

15. ¶ And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, *namely,* the tent of the testimony: and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning. 16. So it was always: the cloud covered it *by day,* and the appearance of fire by night. 17. And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle; then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. 18. At the commandment of the LORD the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the LORD they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle, they rested in their tents. 19. And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the LORD, and journeyed not. 20. And so it was when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle: according to the commandment of the LORD they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the LORD they journeyed. 21. And so it was when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed: 22. Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed. 23. At the commandment of the LORD they rested in their tents, and at the commandment of the LORD they journeyed: they kept the charge of the LORD at the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

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CHAP. X.

In this chapter we have, 1. Orders given about the making and using of silver trumpets, which seems to have been the last of all the commandments God gave upon mount Sinai, and one of the least, yet not without its significancy, *ver. 1—10.* 2. The history of the removal of Israel's camp from mount Sinai, and their orderly march into the wilderness of Paran, *ver. 11—28.* 3. Moses's treaty with Hobab, his brother-in-law, *ver. 29—32.* 4. Moses's prayer at the removing and resting of the ark, *ver. 33—36.*

1. AND the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps. 3. And when they shall blow with them all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 4. And if they blow but with one trumpet, then the princes which are heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee. 5. When ye blow an alarm, then the camps that lie on the east-parts, shall go forward. 6. When ye blow an alarm the second time, then the camps that lie on the south-side shall take their journey: they shall blow an alarm for their journeys. 7. But when the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow; but ye shall not found an alarm. 8. And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance for ever throughout your generations. 9. And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets, and ye shall be remembered before the LORD your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies. 10. Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt-offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace-offerings: that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God.

We have here directions concerning the public notices that were to be given to the people upon several occasions by sound of trumpet. In a thing of this nature one would think Moses needed not to have been taught of God, his own reason might teach him the conveniency of trumpets; but their constitution was to be in every thing divine, and therefore even in this matter, as small as it seems, Moses is here directed, 1. About the making of them. They must be made of silver, not cast, but of beaten work, (as some read it) the matter and shape, no doubt, very fit for that purpose. He was now ordered to make but two, because there were but two priests to use them. But in Solomon's time we read of a hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets, *2 Chron. v. 12.* The form of these trumpets is supposed to be much like ours at this day. 2. Who were to make use of them, not any inferior person, but the priests themselves, the sons of Aaron, *ver. 8.* As great as they were, they must not think it a disparagement to them to be trumpeters in the house of God: the meanest office there was honourable: This signified, that the Lord's ministers should lift up their voice like a trumpet, to shew people their sins, *Iju. lviii. 1.* and to call them to Christ, *Iju. xxvii. 13.* 3. Upon what occasions the trumpets were to be sounded. 1. For the calling of assemblies, *ver. 2.* Thus they are bid to blow the trumpet in Zion, for the calling of a solemn assembly together, to sanctify a fast, *Joel ii. 13.* Public notice ought to be given of the time and place of religious assemblies for the invitation to the benefit of ordinances in general, *whoever will let him come.* Wisdom cries in the chief places of concourse. But that the trumpet might not give an uncertain sound, they are directed, if only the princes and elders were to meet, to blow only one of the trumpets; lest should serve to call them together, who ought to be examples of forwardness in any thing that is good: but if the body of the people were to be called together, both the trumpets must be sounded, that they might be the further heard. In allusion to this, they are said to be blessed

that hear the joyful sound, *Psal.* lxxxix. 15. i. e. that are invited, and called upon, to wait upon God in public ordinances, *Psal.* cxxii. 1. And the general assembly at the great day will be summoned by the sound of the archangel's trumpet, *Matth.* xxiv. 31. 2. For the journeying of the camps. To give notice when each squadron must move, for no man's voice could reach to give the word of command: soldiers with us that are well disciplined may be exercised by beat of drums. When the trumpets were blown for this purpose, they must *sound an alarm*, *ver.* 5. a broken, quavering, interrupted sound, which was proper to excite and encourage the minds of people in their marches against their enemies; whereas a continued equal sound was more proper for the calling of the assembly together, *ver.* 7. yet when the people were called together to deprecate God's judgments, we find an alarm sounded, *Joel* ii. 3. At the first sounding Judah's squadron marched, at the second Reuben's, at the third Ephraim's, at the fourth Dan's, *ver.* 5, 6. And some think this was intended to sanctify their marches, for this was proclaimed by the priests, who were God's mouth to the people, not only the divine orders given them to move, but the divine blessing upon them in all their motions. He that hath ears, let him hear, that *God is with them of a truth*. King Abijah valued himself and his army very much upon this, *2 Chron.* xiii. 12. *God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets*. 3. For the animating and encouraging of their armies, when they went out to battle, *ver.* 9. *If ye go to war, blow with the trumpets*, signifying thereby your appeal to Heaven, for the decision of the controversy, and your prayer to God to give you victory, and God will own this his own institution, and *you shall be remembered before the Lord your God*. God will take notice of this sound of the trumpet, and be engaged to fight their battles, and let all the people take notice of it, and be encouraged to fight his, as David, when he heard a sound of a going upon the tops of the mulberry trees. Not that God needed to be awaked by sound of trumpet, no more than Christ need to be awaked by his disciples in the storm, *Matth.* viii. 25. But where he intends mercy, it is his will that we should solicit for it; ministers must stir up the good soldiers of Jesus Christ, to fight manfully against sin, the world, and the devil, by assuring them that Christ is the *captain of their salvation*, and will *tread Satan under their feet*. 4. For the solemnizing their sacred feast, *ver.* 10. One of their feasts was called the *feast of trumpets*, *Lev.* xxiii. 25. And it should seem they were thus to grace the solemnity of all their feasts, *Psal.* lxxxi. 3. and their sacrifices, *2 Chron.* xxix. 27. to intimate with what joy and delight they perform their duty to God, and to raise the minds of those that attended the services to a holy triumph in the God they worshipped. And then their performances were for a *memorial before God*; for then he takes pleasure in our religious exercises, when we take pleasure in them. Holy work should be done with holy joy.

11. ¶ And it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony. 12. And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran. 13. And they first took their journey, according to the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses. 14. ¶ In the first place went the standard of the camp of the children of Judah, according to their armies: and over his host was Nahshon, the son of Amminadab. 15. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Issachar, was Nathaneel, the son of Zuar. 16. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Zebulun, was Eliab, the son of Helon. 17. And the tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon, and the sons of Merari, set forward bearing the tabernacle. 18. ¶ And the standard of the camp of Reuben set forward according to their armies: and over his host was Elizur, the son of Shedeur. 19. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Simcon, was Shelumiel, the son of Zurishaddai. 20. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Gad, was Eliaph, the son of Deuel. 21. And the Kohathites set forward, bearing the sanctuary: and the other did set up the tabernacle against they came. 22. ¶ And the standard of the camp of the children of Ephraim set forward according to their armies: and over his host was Elishama, the son of Ammihud. 23. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Manasseh, was Gamaliel, the son of Pedahzur. 24. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Benjamin, was Abidan, the son of Gideoni. 25. ¶ And the standard of the camp of the children of Dan set forward, which was the rereward of all the camps throughout their hosts: and over his host was Ahiezer, the son of Ammishaddai. 26. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Asher, was Pagiel, the son of Ocran. 27. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Naphtali, was Ahira, the son of Enan. 28. Thus were the journeyings of the children of Israel, according to their armies, when they set forward.

Here is, 2. A general account of the remove of the camp of Israel, from mount Sinai, before which mountain it had lain now about a year, in which time and place a great deal of memorable business was done. Of this remove, it should seem God gave them notice some time before, *Deut.* i. 6. *Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain, turn you and take your journey towards the land of promise*. The apostle tells us, that *mount Sinai gendereth to bondage*, *Gal.* iv. 24. and signifies the law there given, which though of use as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, yet we must not rest in it, but advance towards the joys and liberties of the children of God, for our happiness is conferred not by the law, but by promise.

Observe, 1. The signal given, *ver.* 11. *The cloud was taken up*, and we may suppose it stood for some time, till they were ready to march; and a great deal of work it was to take down all those tents, and pack up all those goods that they had there; but every family being employed about their

own, and all at the same time, many hands made quick work of it. 2. The march begun; *They took their journey according to the commandment of the Lord*, and just as the cloud led them, *ver.* 13. Some think mention is thus frequently made in this and the foregoing chapter of the *commandment of the Lord*, guiding and governing them in all their travels, to obviate the calumny and reproach which was afterwards thrown upon Israel, that they tarried so long in the wilderness, because they had lost themselves there, and could not find the way out: No, the matter was not so, in every stage, in every step, they were under a divine conduct, and if they knew not where they were, yet he that led them did. Note, Those that have given up themselves to the conduct of God's word and Spirit, steer a steady course, even then when they seem to be bewildered. While they are sure they cannot lose their God and guide, they need not fear losing their way. 3. The place they rested in after three days march. They went out of the wilderness of Sinai, and rested in the wilderness of Paran. Note, All our removes in this world are but from one wilderness to another. The changes which we think will be for the better, do not always prove so; while we carry about with us, wherever we go, the common infirmities of human nature, we must expect wherever we go to meet with its common calamities; we shall never be at rest, never at home, till we come to Heaven, and all will be well there. 2. A particular draught of the order of their march, according to the late model. 1. Judah's squadron marched first, *ver.* 14, 15, 16. The leading standard now lodged with that tribe, was an earnest of the sceptre, which in David's time should be committed to it, and looked further to the Captain of our salvation, of whom it was likewise foretold, that *unto him should the gathering of the people be*. 2. Then came those two families of the Levites which were entrusted to carry the tabernacle. As soon as ever the cloud was taken up, the tabernacle was taken down, and packed up for a remove, *ver.* 15. And here the six waggons came laden with the more bulky part of the tabernacle. This frequent removing of the tabernacle in all their journeys, signified the moveableness of that ceremonial dispensation. That which was so often shifted, would at length *vanish away*, *Heb.* xii. 27, 28. 3. Reuben's squadron marched forward next, taking place after Judah, according to the commandment of the Lord, *ver.* 18, 19, 20. 4. Then the Kohathites followed with their charge, the sacred furniture of the tabernacle, in the midst of the camp, the safest and most honourable place, *ver.* 24. And they, that is, faith the margin, the Gershonites and Merarites, did *set up the tabernacle against they came*; and perhaps it is expressed thus generally, because if there were occasion, not those Levites only, but the other Israelites that were in the first squadron, lent a hand to the tabernacle to hasten the rearing of it up, even before they set up their own tents. 5. Ephraim's squadron followed next after the ark, *ver.* 22, 23, 24. to whom some think the Psalmist alludes, when he prays, *Psal.* lxxx. 2. *Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh; the three tribes that composed this squadron, stir up thy strength (and the ark is called his strength, *Psal.* lxxviii. 6.) and come and save us*. 6. Dan's squadron followed last, *ver.* 25, 26, 27. It is called the rereward, or gathering host of all the camps, because it gathered up all that were left behind, not the women and children, those we may suppose were taken care of by the heads of their families, in their respective tribes; but all the unclean, the mixed multitude, and all that are weak and feeble, and cast behind in their march. Note, He that leadeth Joseph like a flock, has a tender regard to the hindmost, that cannot keep pace with the rest, and of all that are given him, he will lose none. See *Ezek.* xxxiv. 16.

29. ¶ And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses's father-in-law, We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the LORD hath spoken good concerning Israel. 30. And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred. 31. And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes. 32. And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the LORD shall do unto us, the same will be done unto thee. 33. ¶ And they departed from the mount of the LORD three days journey: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them in the three days journey, to search out a resting place for them. 34. And the cloud of the LORD was upon them by day, when they went out of the camp. 35. And it came to pass when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee, flee before thee. 36. And when it rested, he said, Return, O LORD, unto the many thousands of Israel.

Here is, 1. An account of what passed between Moses and Hobab, now upon this advance, which the camp of Israel made towards Canaan, Hobab some think was the same with Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, and that the story, *Exod.* xviii. should come in here; it seems more probable, that Hobab was the son of Jethro, *alias* Reuel, or Raguel, *Exod.* ii. 18. And when the father, being aged, went to his own land, *Exod.* xviii. 27. he left his son Hobab with Moses, as Barzillai left Chimham with David; and the same word signifies both a father-in-law, and a brother-in-law. Now this Hobab stopped contentedly with Israel while they encamped at mount Sinai, near his own country, but now they were removing, he was for going back to his own country, and kindred, and his father's house.

Here is, (1.) The kind invitation Moses gave him to go forward with them to Canaan, *ver.* 29. He tempts them with a promise that they would certainly be kind to him, and puts God's word in for security, *the Lord has spoken good concerning Israel, q. d.* Come call in thy lot among us, and thou shalt fare as we fare, and we have the promise of God for it, that we shall fare well. Note, Those that are bound for the heavenly Canaan, should invite and encourage all their friends to go along with them, for we shall have never the less of the treasures of the covenant, and the joys of Heaven, for others coming in to share with us. And what arguments can be more powerful with us, to take God's people for our people, than this, that God *had spoken good concerning them*. It is good having fellowship with those that have fellowship with God, *1 John* i. 3. and going with those with whom God is, *Zech.* viii. 23. (2.) Hobab's inclination, and present resolution, to go back to his own country, *ver.* 30. One would have thought, he that

had seen so much of the special presence of God with Israel, and such surprising tokens of his favour to them, should not have needed much invitation to embark with them. But his refusal must be imputed to the affection he had for his native air and soil, which was not overpowered, as it ought to have been, by a believing regard to the promise of God, and a value for covenant blessings. He was indeed a son of Abraham's loins (for the Midianites descended from Abraham by Keturah), but not an heir of Abraham's faith (*Heb. ix. 8.*), else he had not given Moses this answer. Note, The things of this world, that are seen, draw strongly from the pursuit of the things of the other world, that are not seen. The magnetic virtue of this earth prevail with most people above the attractions of Heaven itself. (3.) The great importunity Moses used with him to alter his resolution, *ver. 31, 32.* He urgeth, (1.) That he might be serviceable to them, *we are to encamp in the wilderness*, (a country well known to Hobab) and *thou mayest be to us instead of eyes*, not to shew us where we must encamp, nor what way we must march, the cloud was to direct that, but to shew us the conveniences and inconveniences of the place we march through, and encamp in, that we may make the best use we can of the conveniences, and the best fence we can against the inconveniences. Note, It will very well consist with our trust in God's providence to make use of the help of our friends, in those things wherein they are capable of being serviceable to us. Even they that were led by miracle, must not slight the ordinary means of direction. Some think Moses suggests this to Hobab, not because he expected much benefit by his informations, but to please him with the thought of being some way useful to so great a body, and so to draw him on with them by the ambition of that honour. Calvin gives quite another sense of this place, very agreeably with the original, which yet I do not find taken notice of by any since. *Leave us not, I pray thee, but come along, to share with us in the promised land, for therefore hast thou known our encampment in the wilderness, and hast been to us instead of eyes; and we cannot make thee amends for sharing with us in our hardships, and doing us so many good offices, unless thou go with us to Canaan: Surely for this reason thou didst set out with us, that thou mightest go on with us.* Note, Those that have begun well, should use that as a reason for their persevering, because otherwise they lose the benefit and recompence of all they have done and suffered. (2.) That they would be kind to him, *ver. 32. What goodness the Lord shall do to us, the same will we do to thee.* Note, 1. We can but give what we receive. We can do no more service and kindness to our friends, than God is pleased to put it into the power of our hand to do. This is all we dare promise, to do good, as God shall enable us. 2. Those that share with God's Israel in their labours and hardships, shall share with them in their comforts and honours. Those that are willing to take their lot with them in a wilderness, shall have their lot with them in Canaan; *if we suffer with them, we shall reign with them*, Luke xxii. 28, 29.

We do not find any reply that Hobab here made to Moses, and therefore we hope his silence gave consent, and he did not leave them. When he perceived he might be useful, he preferred that before the gratifying of his own inclination; and hath therein left us a good example. And we find, *Judg. i. 16.* that his family was no loser by it. And see 1 *Sam. xv. 6.* 2. An account of the communion between God and Israel in this remove. They left the mount of the Lord, *ver. 33.* that mount Sinai, where they had seen his glory, and heard his voice, and had been taken into covenant with him, they must not expect that such appearances of God to them, as they had there been blest with, should be constant; they depart from that celebrated mountain, which we never read of in scripture any more, unless with reference to these past stories; now farewell Sinai, Zion is the mountain of which God has said, *This is my rest for ever*, *Plal. cxxxii. 14.* and of which we must say so. But when they left that mount of the Lord, they took with them the ark of the covenant of the Lord, by which their stated communion with God was to be kept up. For, 1. By it God did direct their paths. The ark of the covenant went before them, some think in place, at least in this remove, others think, only in influence; though it was carried in the midst of the camp, yet the cloud that hovered over it directed all their motions. The ark, that is, the God of the ark, is said to *search out a resting place* for them, not that God's infinite wisdom and knowledge needs to make searches, but every place they were directed to was as convenient for them, as if the wisest man they had among them had been employed to go before them, and mark out their camp to the best advantage. Thus Canaan is said to be a land which God *spied out*, *Ezek. xx. 6.* 2. By it they did in all their ways acknowledge God, looking upon it as a token of God's presence: when that moved or rested, they had their eye up unto God. Moses, as the mouth of the congregation, lifted up a prayer, both at the removing, and at the resting of the ark; thus their going out and coming in were sanctified by prayer, and it is an example to us to begin and end every day's journey, and every day's work with prayer. 1. Here is his prayer when the ark set forward, *ver. 35: Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered.* They were now in a desolate country, but they were marching towards an enemy's country, and their dependence was upon God for success and victory in their wars, as well as for direction and supply in the wilderness. David used this prayer long after, *Psal. lxxviii. 1.* for he also fought the Lord's battles: Note, (1.) There are those in the world that are enemies to God, and haters of him. Secret and open enemies; enemies to his truths, his laws, his ordinance, his people. (2.) The scattering and defeating of God's enemies is a thing to be earnestly desired, and believingly expected, by all the Lord's people. This prayer is a prophecy: Those that persist in rebellion against God, are hastening towards their own ruin. (3.) For the scattering and defeating of God's enemies, there needs no more but God's arising. When God arose to judgment, the work was soon done, *Psal. lxxvi. 3, 9.* Rise, Lord, as the sun riseth to scatter the shadows of the night, Christ rising from the dead scattered his enemies, *Psal. lxxviii. 18.* 2. His prayer when the ark rested, *ver. 36.* (1.) That God would cause his people to rest. So some read it, *Return, O Lord, the many thousands of Israel, return them to their rest again after this fatigue.* Thus it is said, *Isa. lxxiii. 14. The Spirit of the Lord causeth him to rest.* Thus he prays that God would give Israel success and victory abroad, and peace and tranquillity at home. (2.) That God himself would take up his rest among them. So we read it, *Return to the thousands of Israel, the ten thousand thousand.* So the word is. Note, 1. The church of God is a great body; there are many thousands belonging to God's Israel. 2. We ought in our prayers to concern ourselves for this body. 3. The welfare and happiness of the Israel of God consists in the remaining presence of God among them. Their safety consists not in their numbers, though they are thousands, many thousands, but in the favour of God, and his gracious return to them; and residence with them. These thousands are cyphers, he is the figure; and upon this account, *Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people!*

C H A P. XI.

Hitherto things had gone pretty well in Israel, little interruption had been given to the methods of God's favour to them, since the matter of the golden calf, the people seemed teachable in mar-

shall and purifying the camp, the princes devout and generous in dedicating the altar, and there was good hope that they would be in Canaan presently. But at this chapter begins a melancholy scene, the measures are all broke, God is turned to be their enemy, and fights against them, and it is a sin, sin, that makes all the mischief. 1. Their murmurings kindled a fire among them, which yet was soon quenched by the prayer of Moses, *ver. 1—3.* 2. No sooner was that fire of judgment quenched, but the fire of sin breaks out again, and God takes occasion from it to magnify both his mercy and his justice. 1. The people fret for want of flesh, *ver. 4—2.* 2. Moses frets for want of help, *ver. 10—15.* Now, 1. God promised to gratify them both, to appoint help for Moses, *ver. 16, 17.* And to give the people flesh, *ver. 18—23.* And, 2. He presently makes good both his promises. For, 1. The Spirit of God qualifies the seventy elders for the government, *ver. 24—30.* 2. The power of God brings quails to feast the people, *ver. 31, 32.* Yet, 3. The justice of God plagued them for their murmurings, *ver. 33—35.*

1. **A**ND when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled: and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. 2. And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched. 3. And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them.

Here is, 1. The people's sin. They complained, *ver. 1. They were, as it were complainers.* So it is in the margin. There were some secret grudgings and discontents among them, which as yet did not break out in an open mutiny. But how great a matter did this little fire kindle! They had received from God excellent laws and ordinances, and yet no sooner were they departed from the mount of the Lord, but they began to quarrel with God himself. See in this, (1.) The sinfulness of sin, which takes occasion from the commandments to be the more provoking. (2.) The weakness of the law through the flesh, *Rom. viii. 3.* The law discovered sin, but could not destroy it; checked it, but could not conquer it.

They complained. Interpreters enquire what they complained of; and truly when they were furnished with so much matter for thanksgiving, one may justly wonder where they found any matter for complaint: and it is likely all that complained, did not agree in the cause. Some perhaps complained that they were removed from mount Sinai, where they had been at rest so long, others that they did not remove sooner: some complained of the weather, others of the ways: some perhaps thought the day's journey was too long a march, others thought it not long enough, because it did not bring them into Canaan. When we consider how their camp was guarded, guarded, graced, what good victuals they had, and good company, and what care was taken of them in their marches, that their feet should not swell, nor their clothes wear, (*Deut. viii. 4.*) we may ask, what could have been done more for a people to make them easy? And yet they complained. Note, Those that are of a fretful, discontented spirit, will always find something or other to quarrel with, though the circumstances of their outward condition be ever so favourable. 2. God's just resentment of the affront given him by this sin. The Lord heard it, though it doth not appear that Moses did. Note, God is acquainted with the secret frets and murmurings of the heart, though they are industriously concealed from men. What he took notice of, he was much displeased with, and his anger was kindled. Note, Though God graciously gives us leave to complain to him when there is cause, (*Psal. cxlii. 2.*) yet he is justly provoked, and takes it very ill, if we complain of him when there is no cause; we do so from our inferiors. 3. The judgment wherewith God chastised them for this sin. The fire of the Lord burnt among them, such flames of fire from the cloud as had consumed Nadab and Abihu. The fire of their wrath against God burned in their minds, (*Psal. xxxix. 3.*) and justly doth the fire of God's wrath fasten upon their bodies. We read of their murmurings several times when they came first out of Egypt, *Exod. xv. and xvi. and xvii.* But we do not read of any plagues inflicted on them for their murmurings, as there were now; for now they had had great experience of God's care of them, and therefore now to distrust him, was so much the more execrable. Now a fire was kindled against Jacob, *Plal. lxxviii. 21.* but to shew how unwilling God was to contend with them, it fastened on those only that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. Thus God's judgments came upon them gradually, that they might take warning. 4. Their cry to Moses, who was their tried intercessor, *ver. 2. When he flew them, then they sought him, and made their application to Moses to stand their friend.* Note, 1. When we complain without cause, it is just with God to give us cause to complain. 2. Those that slight God's friends, when they are in prosperity, would be glad to make them their friends when they are in distress: *Father Abraham, send Lazarus.* 5. The prevalency of Moses's intercession for them; when Moses prayed unto the Lord, as he was always ready to stand in the gap to turn away the wrath of God, God had respect to him and his offering, and the fire was quenched. By this it appears, that God delights not in punishing, for when he has begun his controversy, he is soon prevailed with to let it fall. Moses was one of those worthies, who by faith quenched the violence of fire. 6. A new name given hereupon to the place, to perpetuate the shame of a murmuring people, and the honour of a righteous God; the place was called Taberah, a burning, *ver. 3.* that others might hear and fear, and take warning not to sin as they did, lest they smart as they did, 1 *Cor. x. 10.*

4. ¶ And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? 5. We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: 6. But now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all, besides this manna, before our eyes. 7. And the manna was as coriander-seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium: 8. And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste

taste of fresh oil. 9. And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it. 10. ¶ Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased. 11. And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burthen of all this people upon me? 12. Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom (as a nursing-father beareth the sucking child) unto the land which thou swearest unto their fathers? 13. Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh that we may eat. 14. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because *it is too heavy for me*. 15. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.

These verses represent things sadly unhinged, and out of order, in Israel: both the people and the prince uneasy.

1. Here is the people fretting, and speaking against God himself, (as it is interpreted, *Psal. lxxviii.* 19.) notwithstanding his glorious appearances both to them, and for them.

Observe, 1. Who were the criminals, (1.) The *mixed multitude* began, they fell *alisting*, ver. 4. The rabble that came with them out of Egypt, expecting only the land of promise, but not a state of probation in the way to it. They were hangers on, which took hold of the skirts of the Jews, and would go with them, only because they knew not how to live at home, and were minded to seek their fortunes (as we say) abroad. These were the scabbed sheep that infected the flock, the leaven that leavened the whole lump. Note, A new factious, discontented, ill-natured people, may do a great deal of mischief in the best societies, if great care be not taken to discountenance them. Such as these are an *untoward generation*, from which it is our wisdom to *save ourselves*, Acts ii. 40. (2.) Even the children of Israel took the infection, so it follows, ver. 4. The holy seed joined themselves to the people of these abominations. This mixed multitude was not numbered with the children of Israel, but were set aside as people God made no account of, and yet the children of Israel, forgetting their own character and distinction, herded themselves with them, and learned their way; as if the scum and out-casts of the camp were to be the privy-counsellors of it. The children of Israel, a people near to God, and highly privileged, yet drawn into a rebellion against him. O! how little honour hath God in the world, when even that people which he formed for himself, to shew forth his praise, were so much a dishonour to him. Therefore let none think that their external professions and privileges will be their security either against Satan's temptations to sin, or against God's judgments for sin. See 1 Cor. x. 1, 2—12. 2. What was the crime? they lusted, and murmured. Though they were newly corrected for this sin, and many of them overthrown for it, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and the smell of the fire was still in their nostrils, yet they returned to it. See *Prov. xxvii.* 22.

1. They magnified the plenty and dainties they had had in Egypt, ver. 5. as if God had done them a great deal of wrong in taking them thence. While they were in Egypt, they sighed by reason of their burdens, for their lives were made bitter to them with hard bondage; and yet now they talk of Egypt, as if they had all lived like princes there, when this serves as a colour for their present discontent. But with what face can they talk of eating fish in Egypt freely, or for nought, as if it cost them nothing, when they paid so dear for it with their hard service? They remember the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the gartick, (precious stuff indeed to be fond of!) but they do not remember the brick-kilns, and the task-masters, the voice of the oppressor, and the smart of the whip. No, these are forgotten by these ungrateful people. 2. They were sick of the good provision God had made for them, ver. 6. It was bread from heaven, angels food, to shew how unreasonable their complaint was, it is here described, ver. 7, 8, 9. It was good for food, and pleasant to the eye; every grain like an orient pearl; it was wholesome food, and nourishing; it was not to be called dry bread, for it tasted like fresh oil; it was agreeable (the Jews say) to every man's palate, and tasted as he would have it; and though it was still the same, yet, by the different ways of dressing it, it yielded them a grateful variety: it cost them no money, nor care, for it fell in the night, while they slept, and the labour of gathering it was not worth speaking of; they lived upon free quarter, and yet could talk of Egypt's cheapness; and the fish they eat there freely. Nay, which was much more valuable than all this, the manna came from the immediate power and bounty of God, not from common providence, but from special favour. It was, as God's compassion, new every morning, always fresh, not as their food that live on ship-board. While they lived on manna, they seemed to have been exempted from the curse which sin has brought on man, that in the sweat of his face he should eat bread. And yet they speak of the manna with such scorn, as if it were not good enough to be swine's meat. *Our soul is dried away*. They speak as if God dealt hardly with them in allowing them no better food; at first they admired it, *Exod. xvi.* 5. *What is this?* What a curious precious thing is this? But now they despised it. Note, Peevish discontented minds will find fault with that which had no fault in it, but that it is too good for them. It is very provoking to God to undervalue his favours, and to put a *but* upon our common mercies. *Nothing but manna*. Those that are very happy, oft make themselves very miserable by their discontents. 3. They could not be satisfied unless they had flesh to eat. They brought flocks and herds with them in great abundance out of Egypt; but either they were covetous, and could not find in their hearts to kill them, lest they should lessen their flocks; they must have flesh as cheap as they had bread, or they would not be pleased; or else they were curious, beef and mutton would not please them, they must have something more nice and delicate, like the fish they did eat in Egypt. Food would not serve, they must be feasted; they had feasted with God upon the peace-offerings, which they had their share of; but it seems God did not keep a table good enough for them; they must have daintier bits than any that came to his altar. Note, It is an evidence of the dominion of the carnal mind, when we are solicitous to have all the delights and satisfactions of sense wound up to the height of pleasureableness, *Be not desirous of dainties*, *Prov. xxiii.* 1, 2, 3. If God give us food con-

venient, we ought to be thankful, though we do not eat the fat, and drink the sweet. 4. They distrusted the power and goodness of God as insufficient for their supply: *Who will give us flesh to eat?* taking it for granted that God could not. That this question is commented upon, *Psal. lxxviii.* 19, 20. *Can he give flesh also?* Though he had given them flesh with their bread once, when he law sit, *Exod. xvi.* 13. and they might have expected that he would have done it again, and in mercy, if instead of murmuring they had prayed. Note, It is an offence to God, to let our desires go beyond our faith. 5. They were eager and importunate in their desires; they lusted a lust; so the word is, lusted greatly and greedily, till they wept again for vexation. So childish were the children of Israel, and so humour-some, they cried because they had not what they would have, and when they would have it. They did not offer up this desire to God, but would rather he beholden to any one else than to him. We should not indulge ourselves in any desire, which we cannot in faith turn into prayer, as we cannot when we *ask meat for our lust*, *Psal. lxxviii.* 18.

For this sin the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly against them; which is written for our admonition, that we should not *lust after evil things*, as they lusted, 1 Cor. x. 10. Flesh is good food, and may lawfully be eaten, yet they are said to lust after evil things; what is lawful in itself, becomes evil to us, when it is what God doth not allot to us, and yet we eagerly desire it. 2. Moses himself, though so meek and good a man, is uneasy upon this occasion. *Moses also was displeased*. Now, 1. It must be confessed, that the provocation was very great. These murmurings of theirs reflected great dishonour upon God, and Moses laid to heart the reproaches cast on him. They also created great vexation to himself; they knew he did his utmost for their good, and that he did nothing, nor could, without a divine appointment; and yet to be thus continually teased and clamoured upon by an unreasonable, ungrateful people, would break in upon the temper even of Moses himself. God considered this, and therefore we do not find, that he chid him for his uneasiness. 2. Yet Moses expressed himself otherwise than became him upon this provocation, and came short of his duty both to God and Israel in these expostulations. (1.) He undervalues the honour God had put upon him, in making him the illustrious minister of his power and grace, in the deliverance and conduct of that peculiar people, which might have been sufficient to balance the burden. (2.) He complains too much of a sensible grievance, and lays too near his heart a little noise and fatigue. If he could not bear the toil of government, which was, but "running with the footmen," how would he bear the terrors of war, which was "contending with horses?" He might easily have furnished himself with considerations enough to enable him to slight their clamours, and make nothing of them. (3.) He magnifies his own performances, that *all the burden of the people lay upon him*. Whereas God himself did in effect ease him of all the burden. Moses needed not to be in care to provide quarters for them, or victuals; God did all: And if any difficult case happened, he needed not be in any perplexity, while he had the oracle to consult, and in it the divine wisdom to direct him, the divine authority to back him, and bear him out, and almighty power itself to dispense rewards and punishments. (4.) He is not sensible, as he ought to be, of the obligation he lay under from the divine commission and command, to do the utmost he could for his people, when he suggests, that because they were not the children of his body begotten, therefore he was not concerned to take a fatherly care of them, though God himself, who might employ him as he pleased, had appointed him to be a father to them. (5.) He takes too much to himself when he asks, *Whence should I have flesh to give them?* ver. 13. as if he were the house-keeper, and not God. *Moses gave them not the bread*, John vi. 34. Nor was it expected that he should give them the flesh, but as an instrument in God's hand; and if he meant, whence should God have it for them: he too much limited the power of the holy One of Israel. (6.) He speaks distrustfully of the divine grace, when he despairs of being able to bear all this people, ver. 14. Had the work been much less, he could not have gone through it in his own strength; but had it been much greater through God strengthening him, he might have done it. (7.) It was wort of all passionately to wish for death, and desire to be killed out of hand, because just at this time his life was made a little uneasy to him, ver. 15. Is this Moses? Is this the meekest of all the men on the earth? The best have their infirmities, and fall sometimes in the exercise of that grace, which they are most eminent for. But God graciously overlooked Moses's passion at this time, and therefore we must not be severe in our animadversions upon it, but pray, *Lord, lead us not into temptation*.

16. ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them: and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. 17. And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone. 18. And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow, and ye shall eat flesh (for ye have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt) therefore the LORD will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. 19. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; 20. But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the LORD which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt? 21. And Moses said, The people amongst whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen: and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. 22. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them? 23. And the LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee, or not.

We have here God's gracious answer to both the foregoing complaints, wherein his goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the

the more illustrious. 1. Provision is made for the redress of the grievances Moles complains of. If he find the weight of government lie too heavy upon him, though he was a little too passionate in his remonstrance, yet he shall be eased, not by being discarded from the government himself, as he justly might have been, if God had been extreme to mark what he said amiss, but by having assistants appointed him, who should be as the apostle speaks, *1 Cor. xii. 28. helps, governments, i. e. helps in government*, not at all to lessen or eclipse his honour, but to make the work more easy to him, and to bear the burden of the people with him. And that this provision might be both agreeable and really serviceable. (1.) Moles is directed to nominate the persons, *ver. 16.* The people were too hot and heady, and tumultuous, to be intrusted with the election; Moles must please himself in the choice, that he may not afterwards complain. The number he is to choose, is seventy men, according to the number of souls that went down into Egypt. He must choose such as he knew to be elders, *i. e. wise and experienced men.* Those that had acquitted themselves best, as *rulers of thousands and hundreds*, *Exod. xviii. 25.* purchase to themselves now this good degree. Choose such as thou knowest to be elders indeed, and not in name only, officers that do their office. We read of the same number of elders, *Exod. xxiv. 1.* that went up with Moles to mount Sinai, but they were distinguished only for that occasion, these for a perpetuity; and according to this constitution the sanhedrim, or great council of the Jews, which in after-ages sat at Jerusalem, and was the highest court of judgment among them, consisted of seventy men. And our Saviour seems to have had an eye to it, in the choice of seventy disciples, who were to be assistants to the apostles, *Luke x.* (2.) God promiseth to qualify them. If they were not found fit for the employ, they should be made fit, else they might prove more a hindrance than a help to Moles, *ver. 17.* Though Moles had talked too boldly with God, yet God did not therefore break off communion with him; he bears a great deal with us, and we must with one another; *I will come down (saith God) and talk with thee*, when thou art more calm and composed; and *I will take of the same spirit of wisdom, and piety, and courage that is upon thee*, and put it upon them. Not that Moles had the less of the spirit for their sharing, nor that they were hereby made equal with him. Moles was still a nonchuck, *Deut. xxxiv. 10.* but they were clothed with a spirit of government proportionable to their place, and with a spirit of prophecy to evidence their divine call to it, the government being a theocracy. Note, 1. Those whom God employs in any service he qualifies for it, and those that are not in some measure qualified, cannot think themselves duly called. 2. All good qualifications are from God; every perfect gift is from the Father of lights. 3. Even the humour of the discontented people shall be gratified too, that every mouth may be stopped. They are bid to *sanctify themselves*, *ver. 18. i. e. to put themselves into a posture to receive such a proof of God's power*, as should be a token both of mercy and judgment. *Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel*, *Amos iv. 2.*

1. God promiseth (shall I say!) he threatens rather, that they should have their belly full of flesh; that for a month together they should not only be fed, but feasted with flesh, besides their daily manna; and if they had not a better government of their appetites, than it now appeared they had, they should be forfeited with it, *ver. 19, 20.* You shall eat till it come out at your nostrils, and become loathsome to you. See here, 1. The vanity of all the delights of sense, they will cloy, but not satisfy; spiritual pleasures are contrary. As the world passeth away so do the lusts of it, *1 John ii. 17.* What was greedily coveted in a little time comes to be nauseated. 2. What brutish sins (and worse than brutish) gluttony and drunkenness are: They put a force upon nature, and make that the sickness of the body, which should be its health; they are sins that are their own punishments, and yet not the worst that attend them. 3. What a righteous thing it is with God, to make that loathsome to men, which they have inordinately lusted after. God could make them despise flesh, as much as they had despised manna. 2. Moles objects the improbability of making good this word, *ver. 21, 22.* It is an objection like that which the disciples made, *Mark viii. 4. Whence can a man satisfy these men?* Some excuse Moles here, and construe what he saith as only a modest inquiry, which way the supply must be expected; but it favours too much of diffidence and distrust of God to be justified. He objects the number of the people, as if he that provided bread for them all could not by the same unlimited power, provide flesh too. He reckons it must be the flesh either of beasts or fishes, because of them are the most bulky animals; little thinking that the flesh of birds, little birds, should serve the purpose. God fees not as man fees, but his thoughts are above ours. He objects the greediness of the people's desire, in that word, *to suffice them.* Note, Even true and great believers sometimes find it hard to trust God under the discouragements of second causes, and against hope to believe in hope. Moles himself can scarce forbear saying, *Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?* when this was become the common cry. No doubt this was his infirmity. 3. God gives a short but sufficient answer to the objection, in that question, *Is the Lord's hand waxed short?* *ver. 23.* If Moles had remembered the years of the right hand of the most High, he had not started at all these difficulties, therefore God minds him of them, intimating, that this objection reflected upon the divine power, which he himself had been so oft not only the witness, but the instrument of. Had he forgot what wonders the divine power had wrought for that people, inflicted the plagues of Egypt, divided the sea, broached the rock, and rained bread from Heaven, and is that power abated? Is God weaker than he used to be? Or, is he tired with what he has done? Whatever our unbelieving hearts may suggest to the contrary, it is certain, 1. That God's hand is not short, his power cannot be restrained in the exerting of itself by any thing but his own will, with him nothing is impossible. That hand is not short which measures the waters, meets out the heavens, *(Isa. xl. 12.)* and grasps the wind. *(Prov. xxx. 4.)* 2. That it is not waxed short. He is as strong as ever he was, *fainteth not, neither is weary.* And this is sufficient to silence all our distrusts, when means fail us, *Is any thing too hard for the Lord?* God here brings Moles to this first principle, sets him back in his lesson, to learn the ancient name of God, *The Lord God Almighty*, and puts the proof upon the issue, *Thou shalt see whether my word shall come to pass or not.* This magnifies God's word above all his name, that his works never come short of it. If he speaks, it is done.

24. And Moles went out, and told the people the words of the LORD, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. 25. And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease. 26. But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Me-

dad: and the Spirit rested upon them (and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle) and they prophesied in the camp. 27. And there ran a young man, and told Moles, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophecy in the camp. 28. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moles, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moles, forbid them. 29. And Moles said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his Spirit upon them. 30. And Moles gat him into the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

We have here the performance of God's word to Moles, that he should have help in the government of Israel. 1. Here is the case of the seventy privy-counsellors in general. Moles though a little disturbed by the tumult of the people, yet was thoroughly composed by the communion with God, and soon came to himself again. And according as the matter was concerted, (1.) He did his part, he presented the seventy elders before the Lord round the tabernacle, *ver. 24.* that they might there stand ready to receive the grace of God, in the place where he manifested himself, and that the people also might be witnesses of their solemn call. Note, Those that expect favour from God, must humbly offer themselves, and their service to him. (2.) God was not wanting to do his part. He gave of his spirit to the seventy elders, *ver. 25.* which enabled them whose capacities and education set them but on a level with their neighbours, yet of a sudden to say and do that which was extraordinary, and which shewed them acted by a divine inspiration, they prophesied and did not cease all that day, and (some think) only that day. They discoursed to the people of the things of God, and perhaps commented upon the law they had lately received with admirable clearness, and fulness, and readiness, and aptness of expression, so that all that heard them might see and say, that *God was with them of a truth*; see *1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.* Thus long after Saul was marked for the government by the gift of prophecy, which came upon him for a day and a night, *1 Sam. x. 6-11.* When Moles was to fetch Israel out of Egypt, Aaron was appointed to be his prophet, *Exod. vii. 1.* But now God had called him to other work, in his room Moles has seventy prophets to attend him. Note, Those are fittest to rule in God's Israel, that are well acquainted with divine things, and are apt to teach to edification. 2. Here is the particular case of two of them, Eldad and Medad, probably two brothers. (1.) They were nominated by Moles to be assistants in the government, but they went not out unto the tabernacle as the rest did, *ver. 26.* Calvin conjectures, that the summons was sent them, yet it did not find them, they were somewhere out of the way; so that though they were written, yet they were not called. Most think they declined coming to the tabernacle, out of an excess of modesty and humility; being sensible of their own weakness and unworthiness, they desired to be excused from coming into the government. Their principle was their praise, but their practice in not obeying orders was their fault. (2.) The Spirit of God found them out in the camp, where they were hid among the stuff, and there they prophesied, *i. e. they exercised their gift of praying, preaching and praising God in some private tent.* Note, The Spirit of God is not tied to the tabernacle, but, like the wind, bloweth where he listeth, *John iii. 8.* Whither can we go from that Spirit? There was a special providence in it, that these two should be absent, for thus it appeared that it was indeed a divine Spirit which the elders were acted by, and that Moles gave them not that Spirit, but God himself. They modestly declined preferment, but God forces it upon them; nay, they have the honour of being named, which the rest have not: for they that humble themselves, shall be exalted; and those are most fit for government, who are least ambitious of it. (3.) Information of this is given to Moles, *ver. 27.* Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp; there is a conventicle in such a tent, and Eldad and Medad are holding forth there, from under the inspection and presidency of Moles, and out of the communion of the rest of the elders. Whoever the person was that brought the tidings, he seems to have looked upon it as an irregularity. (4.) Joshua moves to have them silenced, *ver. 28.* My lord Moles, forbid them; it is probable Joshua himself was one of the seventy, which made him the more jealous for the honour of their order. He takes it for granted, that they were not under any necessitating impulse, for the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets, and therefore he would have them either not to prophesy at all, or to come to the tabernacle, and prophecy in concert with the rest. He doth not desire they should be punished for what they had done, but only restrained for the future. This motion he made from a good principle, not out of any personal disgust to Eldad and Medad, but out of an honest zeal for that which he apprehended to be the unity of the Church, and in concern for the honour of God and Moles. (5.) Moles rejects the motion, and reproves him that made it, *ver. 29.* Enviest thou for my sake? Thou knowest not what manner of spirit thou art of. Though Joshua was Moles's particular friend and confidant, though he said this out of a respect to Moles, whose honour he was very loth to see lessened by the call of those elders, yet Moles reproves him, and in him all that are so spirited. 1. We must not secretly grieve at the gifts, graces, and usefulness of others. It was the fault of John's disciples, that they envied Christ's honour, because it shaded their master's, *John iii. 26, &c.* 2. We must not be transported into heats against the weaknesses and infirmities of others. Supposing it was an irregularity that Eldad and Medad were guilty of, yet Joshua was too quick, and too warm upon them. Our zeal must always be tempered with the meekness of wisdom: the righteousness of God needs not the wrath of man, *James i. 20.* 3. We must not make the best and most useful men heads of a party. Paul would not have his name made use of to patronize a faction, *1 Cor. i. 12, 13.* 4. We must not be forward to condemn and silence those that differ from us, as if they did not follow Christ, because they do not follow him with us, *Mark ix. 38.* Shall we reject those whom Christ has owned? or restrain any from doing good, because they are not in every thing of our mind? Moles was of another spirit? so far from silencing these two, and quenching the Spirit in them, that he wishes all the Lord's people were prophets, that is, that he would put his spirit upon them. Not that he would have any set up for prophets, that were not duly qualified, or that he expected that the Spirit of prophecy should be made thus common; but thus he expresseth the love and esteem he had for all the Lord's people, the complacency he took in the gifts of others, and how far he was from being displeased at Eldad's and Medad's prophesying from under his eye. Such an excellent spirit as this blessed Paul was, rejoicing that Christ was preached, though it were by those who therein intended to add affliction to his bonds, *Phil. i. 18.* We ought to be pleased that God is served and glorified, and good done; though to the lessening of our credit, and the credit of our way. (6.) The elders now newly ordained, immediately entered upon their administration, *ver. 30.* when their call was sufficiently attested by their prophesying, they went with

Moses to the camp, and applied themselves to business. Having received the gift, they ministered the same as good stewards. And now Moses was pleased that he had so many to share with him in his work and honour: And, 1. Let the testimony of Moses be credited by those who desire to be in power, That government is a burden. It is a burden of care and trouble to those who make conscience of the duty of it; and to those who do not, it will prove a heavier burden in the day of account, when they fall under the doom of the unprofitable servant that buried his talent. 2. Let the example of Moses be imitated by those that are in power; let them not despise the advice and assistance of others, but desire it, and be thankful for it; not coveting to monopolize wisdom and power. In multitude of counsellors there is safety.

31. ¶ And there went forth a wind from the LORD, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth. 32. And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least, gathered ten homers: and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp. 33. And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed; the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague. 34. And he called the name of that place, Kibroth-hattaavah: because there they buried the people that lusted. 35. And the people journeyed from Kibroth-hattaavah unto Hazeroth: and abode at Hazeroth.

God having performed his promise to Moses, in giving him assessors in the government, and proving thereby the power he has over the spirits of men, by his Spirit: he here performs his promise to the people in giving them flesh, and proving thereby his power over the inferior creatures, and his dominion in the kingdom of nature. Observe, 1. How the people were gratified with flesh in abundance, *ver. 31.* A wind (a south-east wind, as appears, *Psal. lxxviii. 26.*) brought quails. It is uncertain what sort of animals they were; the Psalmist calls them *feathered fowl*, or *fowl of wing*. The learned Bishop Patrick inclines to agree with some modern writers, who think they were locusts, a delicious sort of food well known in those parts, the rather, because they were brought with a wind, lay in heaps, and were dried in the sun for use. Whatever they were, they answered the intention, they served for a month's feast for Israel; such an indulgent father was God to this froward family. Locusts, that had been a plague to fruitful Egypt, feeding upon the fruits, were a blessing to a barren wilderness, being themselves fed upon. 2. How greedy they were of this flesh that God sent them, they *slew upon the spoil* with an insatiable appetite, not regarding what Moses had told them from God, that they would surfeit upon it, *ver. 32.* Two days and a night they were at it, gathering flesh, till every master of a family had brought home ten homers, (that was ten ass-loads) at least. David longed for the water of the well of Bethlehem, but would not drink it when he had it, because it was obtained by venturing; much more reason these Israelites had to refuse this flesh, which was obtained by murmuring, and which they might easily perceive, by what Moses said, was given them in anger; but those that are under the power of a carnal mind will have their lusts fulfilled, though it be to the certain damage and ruin of their precious souls. 3. How dear they paid for their feasts when it came into the reckoning, *ver. 33.* The Lord smote them with a very great plague; some bodily disease, which probably was the effect of their surfeit, and was the death of many of them, and those, it is likely, the ring-leaders in the mutiny. Note, God often grants the desires of sinners in wrath, while he denies the desires of his own people in love. He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul, *Psal. cvi. 15.* By all that was said to them they were not estranged from their lusts, and therefore while the meat was in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, *Psal. lxxviii. 30, 31.* What we inordinately desire, if we obtain it, we have reason to fear that it will be some way or other a grief and cross to us. God satisfied them first, and then plagued them. (1.) To save the reputation of his own power, that it might not be said, He had not cut them off, because he was not able to suffice them. And, (2.) To shew us the meaning of the prosperity of sinners, it is their preparation for ruin; they are fed as an ox for the slaughter. Lastly, The remembrance of this is preserved in the name given to the place, *ver. 34.* Moses called it Kibroth-hattaavah, the graves of lusters, or of lust. And well it had been, if these graves of Israel's lusts had proved the graves of Israel's lust: the warning was designed to be so, but it had not its due effect, for it follows, *Psal. lxxviii. 32.* For all this they sinned still.

C H A P. XII.

In the foregoing chapter we had the vexation which the people gave to Moses, in this we have his patience tried by his own relations, 1. Miriam and Aaron, his own brother and sister, affronted him, *ver. 1—3.* 2. God called them to an account for it, *ver. 4—9.* 3. Miriam was smitten with a leprosy for it, *ver. 10.* 4. Aaron submits, and Moses meekly intercedes for her, *ver. 11—13.* 5. She is healed, but put to shame for seven days, *ver. 14—26.* And this is recorded, to shew that the best persons and families have both their follies and their crosses.

1. AND Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman, whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. 2. And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it. 3. (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)

Here is, 1. The wonderful passion of Aaron and Miriam, they spake against Moses, *ver. 1.* If Moses that received so much honour from God,

yet received so many slights and affronts from men, shall any of us think such trials either strange or hard, and be either provoked or discouraged by them? But who would have thought that disturbance should be created to Moses, (1.) From those that were themselves serious and good; nay, that were eminent in religion, Miriam a prophetess, Aaron the high-priest, both of them joint-commissioners with Moses for the deliverance of Israel? *Mic. vi. 4.* I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. (2.) From those that were his nearest relations, his own brother and sister, who shone so much by rays borrowed from him? Thus the spouse complains, *Cant. i. 6.* My mother's children were angry with me, and quarrels among relations are in a special manner grievous; A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city. Yet this helps to confirm the call of Moses, and shews that his advancement was purely by the divine favour, and not by any compact or collusion with his kindred, who themselves grudged at his advancement. Neither did many of our Saviour's kindred believe on him, *John vii. 5.* It should seem that Miriam began the quarrel, and Aaron having not been employed or consulted in the choice of the seventy elders, was for the present somewhat disgusted, and so was the sooner drawn in to take his sister's part. It would grieve one to see the hand of Aaron in so many trespasses, but it shews that the law made men priests which had infirmity. Satan prevailed first with Eve, and by her with Adam; see what need we have to take heed of being drawn into quarrels by our relations, for we know not how great a matter a little fire may kindle. Aaron ought to have remembered how Moses stood his friend, when God was angry with him for making the golden calf, *Deut. ix. 20.* and not to have rendered him evil for good.

Two things they quarrelled with Moses about, 1. About his marriage; some think a late marriage with a Cushite or Arabian; others because of Zipporah, whom on this occasion they called in scorn an Ethiopian woman; and who they insinuated, had too great an influence upon Moses in the choice of these seventy elders; perhaps there was some private falling out between Zipporah and Miriam, which occasioned some hot words, and one peevish reflection introduced another, till Moses and Aaron came to be interested. 2. About his government; not the mismanagement of it, but the monopolizing of it, *ver. 2.* Hath the Lord spoken only by Moses? Must he only have the choice of the persons on whom the spirit of prophecy shall come, hath he not spoken also by us? Might we not have had a hand in that affair, and preferred our friends, as well as Moses his? They could not deny that God had spoken by Moses, but it was plain he had sometimes spoken also by them; and that which they intended was to make themselves equal with him, though God had so many ways distinguished him. Note, Striving to be greatest is a sin which easily begets disciples themselves, and it is exceedingly sinful. Even those that are well preferred, are seldom pleased if others be better preferred. Those that excel are commonly envied. 2. The wonderful patience of Moses under this provocation. The Lord heard it, *ver. 2.* but Moses himself took no notice of it, for *(ver. 3.)* he was very meek. He had a great deal of reason to relent the affront, it was ill-natured and ill-timed, when the people were disposed to mutiny, and had lately given him a great deal of vexation with their murmurings; which would be in danger of breaking out again, when thus headed and countenanced by Aaron and Miriam; but he, as a deaf man heard not. When God's honour was concerned, as in the case of the golden calf, no man more zealous than Moses, but when his own honour was touched, no man more meek; as bold as a lion in the cause of God, but as mild as a lamb in his own cause. God's people are the meek of the earth, *Zeph. ii. 3.* but some are more remarkable than others for this grace, as Moses, who was thus fitted for the work he was called to, which required all the meekness he had, and sometimes more. And sometimes the unkindness of our friends is a greater trial of our meekness than the malice of our enemies. Christ himself records his own meekness, *Matth. xi. 29.* I am meek and lowly in heart; and the copy of meekness Christ has set was without a blot, Moses's was not.

4. And the LORD spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out. 5. And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. 6. And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. 7. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. 8. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? 9. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them, and he departed.

Moses did not resent the injury done him, nor complained of it to God, or made any appeal to him, but God resented it; he hears all we say in our passion, and is a swift witness of our hasty speeches, which is a reason why we should resolutely bridle our tongues that we speak not ill of others, and why we should patiently stop our ears, and not take notice of it, if others speak ill of us. I heard not, for thou wilt hear, *Psal. xxxviii. 13, 14, 15.* The more silent we are in our own cause, the more is God engaged to plead it. The accused innocent needs to say little, if he knows the judge himself will be his advocate.

(1.) The cause is called, and the parties summoned forthwith to attend at the door of the tabernacle, *ver. 4, 5.* Moses had often shewed himself zealous for God's honour, and now God shewed himself jealous for his reputation; for those that honour God he will honour, nor will he ever be behind-hand with any that appear for him. Judges of old sat in the gate of the city to try causes, and so on this occasion the *Shechinah* in the cloud of glory stood at the door of the tabernacle, and Aaron and Miriam, as delinquents, were called to the bar. (2.) Aaron and Miriam are made to know, that as great as they were, they must not pretend to be equal to Moses, nor set up as rivals with him, *ver. 6, 7, 8.* Were they prophets of the Lord? of Moses it might be truly said, He was. 1. It was true, that God put a great deal of honour upon the prophets; however men mocked them and misused them, they were the favourites and intimates of heaven. God made himself known to them, either by dreams when they were asleep, or by visions when they were awake, and by them made himself known to others. And those are happy, those are great, truly great, truly happy, to whom God makes himself known. Now he doth it, not by dreams and visions

vicious as of old, but by the *Spirit of wisdom and revelation*, who makes known those things to babes, which *prophets and kings* desired to see, and might not. Hence in the last days, the days of the Messiah, the *sons and daughters* are said to *prophecy*. Joel ii. 28. because they shall be better acquainted with the mysteries of the kingdom of grace than even the prophets themselves were, see *Heb. i. 1.* 2. Yet the honour put upon Moses was far greater, *ver. 7.* *My servant Moses is not so*, he excelleth them all. To recompence Moses for his meek and patient bearing the affronts which Miriam and Aaron gave him, God not only cleared him, but praised him; and took that occasion to give him an encomium, which remains upon record to his immortal honour; and thus shall they that are reviled and persecuted for righteousness sake have a *great reward in heaven*, Christ will confess them before his Father and the holy angels. (1.) Moses was a man of great integrity, and tried fidelity. He is *faithful in all my house*. This is put first in his character, because grace excels gifts, love excels knowledge, and sincerity in the service of God puts a great honour upon a man and recommends him to the divine favour, more than learning, abstruse speculations, and an ability to *speak with tongues*. This is that part of Moses's character which the apostle quotes, when he would shew that Christ was greater than Moses; making it out, that he was so in this chief instance of his greatness, for Moses was faithful only as a *servant*, but Christ as a *son*, *Heb. iii. 2-5, 6.* God intrusted Moses to deliver his mind in all things to Israel; Israel intrusted him to treat for them with God; and he was faithful to both. He said and did every thing in the management of that great affair as became an honest good man, that aimed at nothing else but the honour of God, and the welfare of Israel. (2.) Moses was therefore honoured with clear discoveries of God's mind, and a more intimate communion with God, than any other prophet whatsoever. He shall, (1.) Hear more from God than any other prophet, more clearly and distinctly; *With him will I speak mouth to mouth, or, face to face*, *Exod. xxxiii. 11.* as a man speaks to his friend, whom he discourseth with freely and familiarly, and without any confusion or consternation, such as sometimes other prophets were under; as Ezekiel, and Daniel, and St. John himself, when God spake to them. By other prophets God sent to his people reproofs, and predictions of good or evil, which were properly enough delivered in dark speeches, figure, types, and parables; but by Moses he gave laws to his people, and the institution of holy ordinances, which could by no means be delivered by dark speeches, but must be expressed in the plainest and most intelligible manner. (2.) He shall see more of God than any other prophets; *the similitude of the Lord shall he behold*, as he hath seen it in Horeb, when God proclaimed his name before him. Yet he saw only the similitude of the Lord, angels and glorified saints always behold the face of our Father. Moses had the spirit of prophecy in a way peculiar to himself, and which set him far above all other prophets, yet *he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he*, much more doth our Lord Jesus infinitely excel him, *Heb. iii. 1.*

Now let Miriam and Aaron consider who it was they insulted. *Were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? Against my servant, against Moses?* so it runs in the original. How dare you abuse any servant of mine, especially such a servant as Moses, who is a friend, a confidant, and steward of the house? How durst they speak to the grief and reproach of one whom God had so much to say in the commendation of? Might they not expect that God would resent it, and take it as an affront to himself? Note, We have reason to be afraid of saying or doing any thing against the servants of God: it is at our peril if we do, for God will plead their cause, and reckons that what *touches them, touches the apple of his eye*. It is a dangerous thing to offend Christ's little ones, *Matth. xviii. 6.* Those are presumptuous indeed that are not afraid to speak evil of dignities, *2 Pet. ii. 10.* 3. God having thus shewed them their faults and folly, he next shews them his displeasure, *ver. 9.* *The anger of the Lord was kindled against them*, of which perhaps some sensible indications were given in the change of the colour of the cloud, or some flashes of lightening from it. But indeed, it was indication enough of his displeasure, that he departed, and would not so much as hear their excuse, for he needed not, *understanding their thoughts afar off*; and thus he would shew that he was displeased. Note, The removal of God's presence from us, is the surest and saddest token of God's displeasure against us. Wo unto us if he depart; and he never departs till we by our sin and folly drive him from us.

10. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle, and, behold, Miriam became leprous, *white as snow*: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, *she was leprous*. 11. And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. 12. Let her not be as one dead; of whom the flesh is half consumed, when he cometh out of his mother's womb. 13. And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee. 14. ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again. 15. And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again. 16. And afterward the people removed from Hazeroth, and pitched in the wilderness of Paran.

Here is, 1. God's judgment upon Miriam, *ver. 10.* *The cloud departed from off that part of the tabernacle*, in token of God's departure, and presently Miriam became leprous; when God goes, evil comes; expect no good when God departs. The leprosy was a disease oft inflicted by the immediate hand of God as the punishment of some particular sin; as on Gehazi for lying, on Uzziah for invading the priest's office, and here on Miriam for scolding and making mischief among relations. The plague of the leprosy, it is likely, appeared in her face, so that it appeared to all that saw her, she was struck with it; with the worst of it, she was leprous, as snow, not only to white, but so soft; the solid flesh losing its consistency, as that which putrifies doth. Her foul tongue (saith Bishop Hall) is justly punished with a foul face, and her folly in pretending to be a rival with Moses, is made manifest to all men, for every one sees his face to be glorious, and hers to be leprous. While Moses needs a veil to hide his glory, Miriam needs one to hide her shame. Note, Those distempers which any way deform us, ought to be construed as a rebuke to our pride and improved for the cure of it, and under such humbling providences we ought to be very humble. It is a sign the heart is hard indeed if the flesh be mortified, and yet the lusts of the flesh remain unmortified. It should seem that this

plague upon Miriam was designed for an exposition of the law concerning the leprosy, *Lev. xiii.* for it is referred to, upon the rehearsal of that law, *Deut. xxiv. 8, 9.*

Miriam was struck with a leprosy, but not Aaron, because she was first in the transgression, and God would put a difference between those that mislead and those that are misled. Aaron's office, though it saved him not from God's displeasure, yet it helped to secure him from this token of his displeasure; it would not only have suspended him for the present from officiating, when (there being no priests but himself and his two sons) he could ill be spared, but it would have rendered him and his office mean, and would have been a lasting blot upon his family. Aaron as priest was to be the judge of the leprosy, and his performing that part of his office upon this occasion, when he looked upon Miriam, and beheld she was leprous, was a sufficient mortification to him. He was struck through her side, and he could not pronounce her leprous without blushing and trembling, knowing himself to be equally obnoxious. This judgment upon Miriam is improveable by us, as a warning to take heed of putting any affront upon our Lord Jesus. If she was thus chastised for speaking against Moses, what will become of those that sin against Christ? 2. Aaron's submission hereupon, *ver. 11, 12.* he humbles himself to Moses, confesses his fault, and begs pardon. He that but just now joined with his sister in speaking against Moses, here is forced for himself and his sister to make a penitent address to him, and in the highest degree to magnify him, as if he had the power of God to forgive and heal, whom he had so lately vilified. Note, Those that trample upon the saints and servants of God, will one day be glad to make court to them; at furthest, in the other world, as the foolish virgins to the wife for a little oil, and the rich man to Lazarus for a little water; and perhaps in this world, as Job's friends to him for his prayers, and here Aaron to Moses, *Rev. iii. 9.* In his submission, (1.) He confesseth his own and his sister's sin, *ver. 11.* He speaks respectfully to Moses, of whom he had spoken slightly, calls him his Lord, and now turns the reproach upon himself, speaks as one ashamed of what he had said, *we have sinned, we have done foolishly*; those sin, and do foolishly, who revile and speak evil of any, especially of good people, or of those in authority. Repentance is the unsaying of that which we have said amiss, and better it be unsaid, than that we be undone by it. (2.) He begs Moses's pardon, *lay not this sin upon us*. Aaron was to bring his gift to the altar, but knowing that his brother had something against him, he of all men was concerned to reconcile himself to his brother, that he might be qualified to offer his gift. Some think this speedy submission which God saw him ready to make, was that which prevented his being struck with a leprosy as his sister was. (3.) He recommends the deplorable condition of his sister to Moses's compassionate consideration, *ver. 12.* *Let her not be as one dead*, i. e. let her not continue so separated from conversation, defiling all she toucheth, and even to putrify above ground as one dead. He elegantly describes the misery of her case to move his pity. 3. The intercession Moses made for Miriam, *ver. 13.* He cried unto the Lord with a loud voice, because the cloud, the symbol of his presence, was removed, and stood at some distance; and to express his fervency in this request, *Heal her now, O Lord, I beseech thee*. By this he made it to appear, that he did heartily forgive her the injury she had done him, that he had not accused her to God, nor called for justice against her; so far from that, that when God in tenderness to his honour had chastised her insolence, he was the first that moved for reversing the judgment. By this example we are taught to pray for them that despitefully use us; and not to take pleasure in the most righteous punishment inflicted either by God or man on those that have been injurious to us. Jeroboam's withered hand was restored at the special instance and request of the prophet against whom it had been stretched out, *1 Kings xiii. 6.* So Miriam here was healed by the prayer of Moses, whom she had abused, and Abimelech by the prayer of Abraham, *Gen. xx. 7.* Moses might have stood off, and have said, She is served well enough, let her govern her tongue better next time; but not content with being able to say, that he had not prayed for the inflicting of the judgment, he prays earnestly for the removal of it. This pattern of Moses, and that of our Saviour, *Father, forgive them*, we must study to conform to. 4. The accommodating of this matter, so as that mercy and justice might meet together. (1.) Mercy takes place, so far as that Miriam shall be healed; Moses forgives her, and God will. (See *2 Cor. ii. 10.*) But, (2.) Justice takes place, as far as that Miriam shall be humbled, *ver. 14.* *Let her be shut out of the camp seven days*. That she herself might be made more sensible of her fault, and penitent for it; and that her punishment might be the more public, and all Israel might take notice of it, and take warning by it not to mutiny. If Miriam the prophetess be put under such marks of humiliation for one hasty word spoken against Moses, what may we expect for our murmurings? *If this be done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* See how people debate and diminish themselves by sin, stain their glory, and lay their honour in the dust; when Miriam praised God, we find her at the head of the congregation, and one of the brightest ornaments of it, *Exod. xv. 20.* Now she quarrelled with God, we find her expelled as the filth and off-scouring of it.

A reason is given for her being put out of the camp for seven days, because thus she ought to accept of the punishment of her iniquity. If her father, her earthly father, had but spit in her face, and so signified his displeasure against her, would she not be so troubled and concerned at it, and so sorry that she had deserved it, as to shut herself up for some time in her room, and not come into his presence, or to shew her face in the family, being ashamed of her own folly and unhappiness? If such reverence as this be owing to the fathers of our flesh, when they correct us, much more ought we to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of the Father of spirits, *Heb. xii. 9.* Note, When we are under the tokens of God's displeasure for sin, it becomes us to take shame to ourselves, and to lie down in that shame, owning, that *to us belongs confusion of face*. If by our own fault and folly we expose ourselves to the reproach and contempt of men, the just censures of the Church, or the rebukes of the divine providence, we must confess that our father justly spits in our face, and be ashamed. 5. The hindrance that this gave to the people's progress, *ver. 15.* *The people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again*. God did not remove the cloud, and therefore they did not remove their camp. This was intended, (1.) As a rebuke to the people, who were conscious to themselves of having sinned after the similitude of Miriam's transgression, in speaking against Moses: thus far therefore they shall share in her punishment, that it shall retard their march forwards towards Canaan. Many things oppose us, but nothing hinders us, in the way to heaven, so as sin doth, (2.) As a respect to Miriam. If the camp had removed during the days of her suspension, her trouble and shame had been the greater; therefore, in compassion to her, they shall stay till her excommunication be taken off, and she taken in again, it is likely, with the usual cleansing lepers. Note, Those that are under censure and rebuke for sin, ought to be treated with a great deal of tenderness, and not to be over-loaded, no not with the shame they have deserved, nor counted as enemies, *2 Thess. iii. 15.* but forgiven and comforted, *2 Cor. ii. 7.* Sinners must be cast out with griefs, and penitents taken in with joy. When Miriam was absolved, and re-admitted, the people went forward into the wilderness of

of Paran, which joined up to the south border of Canaan, and into that the next remove had been, if they had not put a bar in their own way.

C H A P. XIII.

It is a memorable and very melancholy story, which is related in this and the following chapter, of the turning back of Israel from the borders of Canaan, when they were just ready to set foot on it, and the sentencing of them to wander and perish in the wilderness, for their unbelief and murmuring. It is referred to, Psal. xcv. 7, &c. and improved for warning to us Christians, Heb. iii. 7, &c. In this chapter we have, 1. The sending of twelve spies before them into Canaan, ver. 1—16. 2. The instructions given to these spies, ver. 17—20. 3. Their executing of their commission according to their instructions, and their return from the search, ver. 21—24. 4. The report they brought back to the camp of Israel, ver. 26—33.

1. **AND** the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I gave unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them. 3. And Moses, by the commandment of the LORD, sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men were heads of the children of Israel. 4. And these were their names: Of the tribe of Reuben, Shammua, the son of Zaccur. 5. Of the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat, the son of Hori. 6. Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb, the son of Jephunneh. 7. Of the tribe of Issachar, Igal, the son of Joseph. 8. Of the tribe of Ephraim, Oshea, the son of Nun. 9. Of the tribe of Benjamin, Palti, the son of Raphu. 10. Of the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel, the son of Sodi. 11. Of the tribe of Joseph, *namely*, of the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi, the son of Sufi. 12. Of the tribe of Dan, Ammiel, the son of Gemalli. 13. Of the tribe of Asher, Sethur, the son of Michael. 14. Of the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi, the son of Vophsi. 15. Of the tribe of Gad, Guel, the son of Machi. 16. These are the names of the men which Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Oshea, the son of Nun, Jehoshua. 17. ¶ And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain: 18. And see the land what it is, and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; 19. And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents or in strong holds: 20. And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land (now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes.)

Here is, 1. Orders given to send spies to search out the land of Canaan. It is here said, God directed Moses to send them, ver. 1, 2. but it appears by the repetition of the story afterwards, *Deut. i. 22*, that the motion came originally from the people; they came to Moses and said, *We will send men before us*; and it was the fruit of their unbelief. They would not take God's word that it was a good land, and that he would without fail put them in possession of it: they could not trust the pillar of cloud and fire to shew them the way to it, but have a better opinion of their own politics than of God's wisdom. How absurd was it for them to send to spy out a land, which God himself had spied out for them; to enquire the way into it, when God himself had undertaken to shew them the way? But thus we ruin ourselves, by giving more credit to the reports and representations of sense, than to divine revelation; we walk by sight, not by faith; whereas if we will receive the witness of men, without doubt the witness of God is greater. The people making this motion to Moses, he (perhaps not aware of the unbelief at the bottom of it) consulted God in the case, who bid him gratify the people in this matter, and send spies before them; let them walk in their own counsels. Yet God was no way accessory to the sin that followed, for the sending of these spies was so far from being the cause of the sin, that if the spies had done their duty, and the people theirs, it might have been the confirmation of their faith, and of good service to them. 2. The persons nominated that were to be employed in this service, ver. 3. One of each tribe, that it might appear to be the act of the people in general, and rulers, persons of figure in their respective tribes, some of the rulers of thousands and hundreds, to put the greater credit upon their embassy: this was designed for the best, but it proved to have this ill effect, that the quality of the persons occasioned the evil report they brought up to be the more credited, and the people to be the more influenced by it. Some think they are all named for the sake of two good ones that were among them, Caleb and Joshua. Notice is taken of the change of Joshua's name upon this occasion, ver. 16. He was Moses's minister, but had been employed as general of the forces that were sent out against Amalek, though of the tribe of Ephraim. The name by which he was generally called and known in his own tribe, was Oshea, but Moses called him Joshua, in token of his affection to him, and power over him; and now it should seem he ordered others to call him so, and fixed that to be his name from henceforward. Oshea signifies a prayer for salvation, *Save thou*; Joshua signifies a promise of salvation, *He will save*; in answer to that prayer; so near is the relation between prayers and promises. Prayers prevail for promises, and promises direct and encourage prayers. Some think, Moses designed by taking the first syllable of the name Jehovah, and prefixing it to his name, which turned Oshea into Jehoshua, to put an honour upon him, and to encourage him in this and all his future services with the assurance of God's presence. Yet after this he is called Oshea, *Deut. xxxii. 44*. Jesus is the same name with Joshua, and it is the name of our Lord Christ, of whom Joshua was a type, as successor to Moses, Israel's captain, and conqueror of Canaan.

There was another of the same name who was also a type of Christ, *Zech. vi. 11*. Joshua was the saviour of God's people from the powers of Canaan, but Christ is their Saviour from the power of hell. 3. The instructions given to those spies. They were sent into the land of Canaan, the next way to traverse the country, and to take account of its present state, ver. 17. Two heads of enquiry were given them in charge, (1.) Concerning the land itself; *See what that is*, ver. 18. and again, ver. 19. see whether it be good or bad, and ver. 20. whether it be fat or lean. All parts of the earth do not share alike in the blessing of fruitfulness; some countries are blessed with a richer soil than others; Moses himself was well satisfied that Canaan was a very good land, but he sent those spies to bring an account of it for the satisfaction of the people; as John the Baptist sent to Jesus, to ask whether he was the Christ, not to inform himself, but to inform those he sent. They must take notice whether the air was healthful or no, what the soil was, and what the products; and for the better satisfaction of the people, they must bring with them some of the fruits, (2.) Concerning the inhabitants, their number, few or many; their size and stature, whether strong able-bodied men, or weak; their habitations, whether they lived in tents or houses, whether in open villages, or in walled towns: whether the woods were standing as in those countries that are uncultivated, through the unskillfulness and slothfulness of the inhabitants; or whether the woods were cut down, and the country made champaign, for the convenience of tillage.

These were the things they were to enquire about. Perhaps there had not been of late years such commerce between Egypt and Canaan as there was in Jacob's time, else they might have informed themselves of these things without sending men on purpose to search. See the advantage we have by books and learning, which acquaints those that are curious and inquisitive with the state of foreign countries, at a much greater distance than Canaan was now from Israel, without this trouble and expence.

Moses dismissed the spies with this charge, *Be of good courage*; intimating not only that they should be themselves encouraged against the difficulties of this expedition, but that they should bring an encouraging account to the people, and make the best of every thing. It was not only a great undertaking they were put upon, which required good management and resolution, but it was a great trust that was reposed in them, which required that they should be faithful.

21. ¶ So they went up and searched the land, from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, as men come to Hamath. 22. And they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron; where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak were (now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) 23. And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff, and they brought of the pomegranates and of the figs. 24. The place was called the brook Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence. 25. And they returned from searching of the land after forty days.

We have here a short account of the survey which the spies made of the promised land. 1. They went quite through it, from Zin in the south to Rehob near Hamath in the north, ver. 21. see *Numb. xxxiv. 3—8*. It is likely they did not go all together in a body, lest they should have been suspected; and taken up; which there would be the more danger of if the Canaanites knew, (and one would think they could not but know) how near the Israelites were to them; but they divided themselves into several companies, and so passed unsuspected, as wayfaring men. 2. They took particular notice of Hebron, ver. 21. probably because near there was the field of Machpelah, where the patriarchs were buried, *Gen. xxiii. 2*. whose dead bodies did, as it were, keep possession of that land for their posterity. To this sepulchre they made a particular visit, and found the adjoining city in the possessions of the sons of Anak, who are here named. In that place where they expected the greatest encouragements, they met with the greatest discouragements. Where the bodies of their ancestors kept possession for them, the giants kept possession against them. In the original it is, they ascended by the south, and came to Hebron, i. e. Caleb, say the Jews, in particular, for to his being there, we find express reference, *Josh. xiv. 9—12*. But that others of the spies were there too, appears by their description of the *Anakim*, ver. 33. 3. They brought a bunch of grapes with them, and some other of the fruits of the land, as a proof of the extraordinary goodness of the country. Probably, they furnished themselves with these fruits, when they were leaving the country and returning. The cluster of grapes was so large, and so heavy, that they hung it upon a bar, and carried it between two of them, ver. 23, 24. The place whence they took it was from thence called the valley of the cluster; that famous cluster, which was to Israel both the earnest and the specimen of all the fruits of Canaan. Such are the present comforts which we have in communion with God, foretastes of the fulness of joy we expect in the heavenly Canaan. We may see by them what heaven is.

26. ¶ And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land. 27. And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey: and this is the fruit of it. 28. Nevertheless, the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover, we saw the children of Anak there. 29. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan. 30. And Caleb filled the people before Moses: and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. 31. But the men that went up with him, said, We be not able to

go up against the people, for they are stronger than we. 32. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched, unto the children of Israel, saying, The land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it, are men of a great stature. 33. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

It is a wonder how the people of Israel had patience to stay forty days for the return of their spies, when they were just ready to enter Canaan, under all the assurance of success they could have from the divine power, and a constant series of miracles that had hitherto attended them; but they distrusted God's power and promise, and were willing to be held in suspense by their own counsels, rather than be brought to a certainty by God's covenant. How much do we stand in our own light by our unbelief! Well, at length the messengers return, but they agree not in their report.

1. The major part discourage the people from going forwards to Canaan; and justly is Israel left to this temptation, for putting too much confidence in the judgment of men, when they had the word of God to trust to. It is a righteous thing with God to give those up to strong delusions, who will not receive his truth in the love of it. Observe their report. 1. They cannot deny but that the land of Canaan was a very fruitful land; the bunch of grapes they brought with them was an ocular demonstration of it, ver. 27. God had promised them a land flowing with milk and honey, and the evil spies themselves own that it is such a land. Thus even out of the mouth of adversaries will God be glorified, and the truth of his promise attested. And yet afterwards they contradicted themselves, when they say, ver. 32. *It is a land that eats up the inhabitants thereof*; as if, though it had milk, and honey, and grapes, yet it wanted other necessary provisions; some think there was a great plague in the country at the time that they surveyed it, which they ought to have imputed to the wisdom of the divine providence, which thus lessened the numbers of their enemies, to facilitate their conquests; but they invidiously imputed it to the unwholesomeness of the air, and thence took occasion to disparage the country. For this unreasonable fear of a plague in Canaan, they justly were cut off immediately by a plague in the wilderness, chap. xiv. 37. But, 2. They represent the conquest of it as altogether impracticable, and that it was to no purpose to attempt it. The people are strong, ver. 28. men of a great stature, ver. 32. stronger than we, ver. 31. The cities are represented as impregnable fortresses, they are walled and very great, ver. 28. But nothing served their ill purpose more than a description of the giants, which they lay a great stress upon. *We saw the children of Anak there*, ver. 28. and again, *we saw the giants*, those men of prodigious size, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants, ver. 33. They spake as if they were ready to tremble at the mention of them, as they had done at the sight of them. O these terrible giants! when we were near them, *we were in our own sight as grasshoppers*, not only little and weak, but trembling and daunted; compare Job xxxix. 20. *Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper?* Nay, and *so we were in their sight*; they looked upon us with as much scorn and disdain, as we did upon them with fear and trembling. So that upon the whole matter they give it in as their judgment, *We be not able to go up against them*, ver. 31. and therefore must think of taking some other course.

Now if they had been to judge only by human probabilities, they could not have been excused from the imputation of cowardice. Were not the hosts of Israel very numerous? Six hundred thousand effective men, well marshalled and modelled, closely embodied, and entirely united in interest and affection, was as formidable an army, as perhaps was ever brought into the field, many a less has done more than perhaps the conquering of Canaan was, witness Alexander's army. Moses, their commander in chief, was wise and brave, and if the people had but put on resolution, and behaved themselves valiantly, what could have stood before them? It is true, the Canaanites were strong, but they were dispersed, ver. 29. *Some dwell in the south, and others in the mountains*; so that by reason of their distance they could not soon get together, and by reason of their divided interests they could not long keep together, to oppose Israel. The country being plentiful would sustain an army, and though the cities were walled, if they could beat them in the field, the strong-holds would fall of course into their hands. And, lastly, as for the giants, their overgrown stature would but make them the better mark, and the bulkiest men have not always the best mettle.

But though they deserved to be posted for cowards, that was not the worst, the scripture brands them for unbelievers. It was not any human probabilities they were required to depend upon, but, 1. They had the manifest and sensible tokens of God's presence with them, and the engagement of his power for them. The Canaanites were stronger than Israel; suppose they were, but were they stronger than the God of Israel? We are not able to deal with them, but is not God Almighty able? Have we not him in the midst of us? Doth not he go before us? And is any thing too hard for him? Were we as grasshoppers before the giants, and are they not less than grasshoppers before God? Their cities are walled against us, but can they be walled against heaven? Besides this, 2. They had had very great experience of the length and strength of God's arm lifted up, and made bare on their behalf. Were not the Egyptians as much stronger than they as the Canaanites were, and yet without a sword drawn by Israel, or a stroke struck, the chariots and horsemen of Egypt were quite routed and ruined: the Amalekites took them at great disadvantages, and yet they were discomfited. Miracles were at this time their daily bread; were there nothing else, an army so well victualled as theirs was, so constantly, so plentifully, and all on free cost, would have a mighty advantage against any other force. Nay, 3. They had had particular promises made them of victory and success in their wars against the Canaanites. God had given Abraham all possible assurances that he would put his seed into possession of that land, Gen. xv. 18. xvii. 8. He had expressly promised them by Moses, that he would drive out the Canaanites from before them, Exod. xxiii. 2. and that he would do it by little and little, Exod. xxiii. 30. And after all this, for them to say, *We be not able to go up against them*, was in effect to say, God himself is not able to make his words good. It was in effect to give him the lie, and to tell him he had undertaken more than he could perform. We have a short account of their sin, with which they infected the whole congregation, Psalm cvi. 21. *They despised the land, they believed not his word*. Though upon search they had found it as good as he had said, *a land flowing with milk and honey*; yet they would not believe it as sure as he had said, but despaired of having it, though eternal truth itself had engaged it to them. And now this is the representation of the evil spies. 2. Caleb encouraged them to go forward, though he was se-

conded by Joshua only, ver. 30. *Caleb filled the people whom he saw already put into a ferment, even before Moses himself*, whose shining face could not daunt them, when they began to grow unruly. Caleb signifies all heart, and he answered his name; was hearty himself, and would have made the people so, if they would have hearkened to him. If Joshua had begun to stem the tide, he would have been suspected of partiality to Moses, whose minister he was; and therefore he prudently left it to Caleb's management at first, who was of the tribe of Judah, the leading tribe, and therefore fittest to be heard. Caleb had seen and observed the strength of the inhabitants as much as his fellows, and upon the whole matter, 1. He speaks very confidently of success, *We are well able to overcome them*, as strong as they are. 2. He animates the people to go on, and his lot lying in the van, he speaks as one resolved to lead them on with bravery, *Let us go up at once*, one bold step, one bold stroke more will do our business; it is all our own, if we have but courage to make it so; *Let us go up and possess it*. He doth not say, *Let us go up and conquer it*, he looks upon that to be as good as done already; but, *Let us go up and possess it*; there is nothing to be done but to enter, and take the possession which God our great Lord is ready to give. Note, *The righteous are bold as a lion*. Difficulties that lie in the way of salvation, dwindle and vanish before a lively active faith in the power and promise of God. *All things are possible*, if they be but promised, to him that believes.

C H A P. XIV.

This chapter gives us an account of that fatal quarrel between God and Israel, upon which, for their murmuring and unbelief, he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. Here is, 1. The mutiny and rebellion of Israel against God, upon the report of the evil spies, ver. 1—4. 2. The fruitless endeavour of Moses and Aaron, Caleb and Joshua, to still the tumult, ver. 5—10. 3. Their utter ruin justly threatened by an offended God, ver. 11, 12. 4. The humble intercession of Moses for them, ver. 13—19. 5. A mitigation of the sentence, in answer to the prayer of Moses, they shall not all be cut off, but the decree goes forth ratified with an oath, published to the people, again and again repeated, that this whole generation should perish in the wilderness, and none of them enter Canaan, but Caleb and Joshua only, ver. 20—35. 6. The present death of the evil spies, ver. 36—39. 7. The rebuke given to them who attempted to go forward notwithstanding, ver. 40—45. And this is written for our admonition, that we fall not after the same example of unbelief.

1. **A**ND all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. 2. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses, and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt, or would God that we had died in this wilderness. 3. And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives, and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? 4. And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

Here we see what mischief the evil spies made by their unfair representation. We may suppose these twelve that were impaneled to enquire concerning Canaan, had talked it over among themselves before they brought in their report in public, and Caleb and Joshua it is likely had done their utmost to bring the rest over to be of their mind, and if they would but have agreed that Caleb, according to his post, should have spoke for them all, as their foreman, all had been well; but the evil spies, it should seem wilfully designed to raise this mutiny, purely in opposition to Moses and Aaron, though they could not propole any advantage to themselves by it, unless they hoped to be captains and commanders of the retreat into Egypt they were now meditating. But what came of it? Here in these verses we find those whom they studied to humour, put into a vexation, and, before the end of the chapter, brought to ruin.

Observe, 1. How the people fretted themselves. *They lifted up their voices, and cried*, ver. 1. giving credit to the report of the spies rather than to the word of God, and imagining their condition desperate, they laid the reins on the neck of their passions, and could keep no manner of temper: like foolish forward children they fall a crying, yet know not what they cried for. It had been time enough to cry out, if the enemies had beaten up their quarters, and they had seen the sons of Anak at the gate of their camp; but they that cried when nothing hurt them, deserved to have something given them to cry for. And as if all had been already gone, they sat them down and wept out that night. Note, Unbelief and distrust of God, is a sin that is its own punishment. Those that do not trust God, are continually vexing themselves. The world's mourners are more than God's, and the sorrow of the world worketh death. 2. How they flew in the face of their governors; murmured against Moses and Aaron, and in them reproached the Lord, ver. 2, 3. The congregation of elders began the discontent, ver. 1. but the contagion soon spread through the whole camp, for the children of Israel murmured. Jealousies and discontents spread like wild-fire among the unthinking multitude, who are easily taught to despise dominions, and to speak evil of dignities. 1. They look back with a causeless quarrel. They with they had died in Egypt with the first-born that were slain there; or in the wilderness, with those that lately died of the plague for lusting. See the prodigious madness of unbridled passions, which make men prodigal even of that which nature accounts most dear, life itself. Never were so many months spent so pleasantly, as these which they spent since they came out of Egypt, loaded with honours, compassed with favours, and continually entertained with something or other that was surprising; and yet, as if all these things had not made it worth their while to live, they wished they had died in Egypt. And such a light opinion had they of God's tremendous judgment executed on their neighbours for sin, that they with they had shared with them in their plagues, rather than run the hazard of making a descent upon Canaan. They wish rather to die criminals under God's justice, than live conquerors in his favour. Some read it, *O that we had died in Egypt, or in this wilderness; O that we might die!* They wish to die, for fear of dying; and have not sense enough to reason as the poor lepers, when rather than die upon the spot, they ventured into an enemy's camp, *If they kill us, we shall but die*, 2 Kings vii. 4. How base were the spirits of these

degenerate Israelites! who, rather than die (if it come to the worst) like soldiers in the bed of honour, with their swords in their hands, desire to die like rotten sheep in the wildernesses. 2. They look forward with a groundless despair, taking it for granted, *ver. 3.* that if they went on they must fall by the sword; and pretend to lay the cause of their fear upon the great care they had for their wives and children, who they conclude will be a prey to the Canaanites. And here is a most wicked blasphemous reflection upon God himself, as if he had brought them hither on purpose that they might fall by the sword, and that their wives and children, those poor innocents, should be a prey. Thus do they in effect, charge that God, who is love itself, with the worst of malice, and eternal truth, with the basest hypocrisy; suggesting that all the kind things he had said to them, and done for them hitherto, were intended only to decoy them into a snare, and to cover a secret design carried on all along to ruin them. Daring impudence! But what will not that tongue speak against heaven, that is set on fire of hell! The devil keeps up his interest in the hearts of men, by insinuating to them ill thoughts of God, as if he desired the death of sinners, and delighted in the hardships and sufferings of his own servants, whereas he knows his thoughts to us-ward (whether we know them so or no) to be *thoughts of good and not of evil*, *Jer. xxix. 11.* 3. How they came at last to this desperate resolve, that, instead of going forward to Canaan, they would go back again to Egypt. The motion is first made by way of query only, *ver. 3.* *Were it not better for us to return into Egypt?* But the ferment being high, and the spirits of the people being disposed to entertain any thing that was perverse, it soon ripened to a resolution, without a debate; *ver. 4.* *Let us make a captain, and return to Egypt;* and it is lamented long after, *Neh. ix. 17.* *That in their rebellion they did appoint a captain to return to their bondage; for they knew Moses would not be their captain in this retreat.*

Now, 1. It was the greatest folly in the world to wish themselves in Egypt, or to think, if they were there, it would be better with them than it was. If they durst not go forward to Canaan, yet better be as they were, than go back to Egypt. What did they want? What had they to complain of? They had plenty, and peace, and rest, were under a good government, had good company, had the tokens of God's presence with them, and enough to make them easy even in the wilderness, if they had but hearts to be content. But whether were they thus fond to go to mend themselves? to Egypt? Had they so soon forgotten the fore bondage they were in there? Would they again be under the tyranny of their task-masters, and at the drudgery of making brick? And after all the plagues which Egypt had suffered for their sakes, could they expect any better treatment there than they had formerly, and not rather much worse? In how little time (not a year and a half) have they forgot all the sighs of their bondage, and all the songs of their deliverance! Like brute beasts, they mind only that which is present, and their memories, with the other powers of reason, are sacrificed to their passions. See *Psal. cvi. 7.* We find it threatened, *Deut. xxviii. 68.* as the completing of their misery, that they should be brought into Egypt again; and yet that is it they here wish for. Sinners are enemies to themselves; and those that walk not in God's counsels, consult their own mischief and ruin. 2. It was a most senseless ridiculous thing to talk of returning thither through the wilderness. Could they expect that God's cloud would lead them, or his manna attend them? And if they did not, the thousands of Israel must unavoidably be lost and perish in the wilderness. Suppose the difficulties of conquering Canaan were as great as they imagined, those of returning to Egypt were much greater. In this let us see, 1. The folly of discontent and impatience under the crosses of our outward condition. We are uneasy at that which is, complain of our place and lot, and we would shift; but is there any place or condition in this world, that has not something in it to make us uneasy, if we are disposed to be so? The way to better our condition is to get our spirits into a better frame: and instead of asking, were it not better to go to Egypt? ask, were it not better to be content, and make the best of that which is? 2. The folly of apostacy from the ways of God. Heaven is the Canaan set before us, a land flowing with milk and honey: those that bring up ever so ill a report of it, cannot but say that it is indeed a good land, only it is hard to get to it; strict and serious godliness is looked upon as an impracticable thing, and this deters many who begun well from going on; rather than undergo the imaginary hardships of a religious life, they run themselves upon the certain fatal consequences of a sinful course; and so they transcribe the folly of Israel, who when they were within a step of Canaan would make a captain, and return to Egypt.

5. Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel. 6. ¶ And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes. 7. And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. 8. If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. 9. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not. 10. But all the congregation bade stone them with stones: and the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation, before all the children of Israel.

The friends of Israel here interpose to save them, if possible, from ruining themselves, but in vain. The physicians of their state, would have healed them, but they would not be healed; their watchmen gave them warning, but they would not take the warning, and so their blood is upon their own heads.

1. The best endeavours were used to still the tumult, and if now at last they would have understood the things that belonged to their peace, all the following mischief had been prevented. (1.) Moses and Aaron did their part, *ver. 5.* though it was against them that they murmured, *ver. 2.* yet they bravely overlooked the affront and injury done them, and approve themselves faithful friends to those who were outrageous enemies to them. The clamour and noise of the people was so great, that Moses and Aaron could not be heard; could they order any of their servants to proclaim silence, the angry multitude would perhaps be the more clamorous, and therefore to gain audience in the sight of all the assembly, they fell on their faces, thus expressing, (1.) Their humble prayers to God to still the noise

of this sea, the noise of its waves, even the tumult of the people. (2.) The great trouble and concern of their own spirits; they fell down as men astonished and even thunder-struck, amazed to see a people throw away their own mercies; to see those so ill humoured who were so well taught. And, 3. Their great earnestness with the people to cease their murmurings; they hoped to work upon them by this humble posture, and to prevail with them not to persist in their rebellion; Moses and Aaron beseech them, as though by them God himself did beseech them, to be reconciled unto God. What they said to them, Moses relates in the repetition of this story, *Deut. i. 29, 30.* *Be not afraid, the Lord your God shall fight for you.* Note, Those that are zealous friends to precious souls, will stoop to any thing for their salvation. Moses and Aaron, notwithstanding the pofts of honour they are in, prostrate themselves to the people to beg of them not to ruin themselves. (1.) Caleb and Joshua did their part, rent their clothes in a holy indignation at the sin of the people; and a holy dread of the wrath of God, which they saw ready to break out against them: it was the greater trouble to those good men, because the tumult was occasioned by those spies with whom they had been joined in commission; and therefore they thought themselves obliged to do what they could to still the storm, which their fellows had raised. No reasoning could be more pertinent and pathetic than theirs here, *ver. 7, 8, 9.* and they spake as with authority. 1. They assured them of the goodness of the land they had surveyed, and that it was really worth venturing for, and not a land that eat up the inhabitants, as the evil spies had represented it. It is an exceeding good land, *ver. 7.* it is very, very good; so the word is, so that they had no reason to despise this pleasant land. Note, If men were but thoroughly convinced of the desirableness of the gains of religion, they would not stick at the services of it. 2. They made nothing of the difficulties that seemed to lie in the way of their gaining the possession of it. *Fear not the people of the land*, *ver. 9.* Whatever formidable ideas have been given you of them, the lion is not so fierce as he is painted; *they are bread for us*, i. e. they are set before us rather to be fed upon, than to be fought with; so easily, so pleasantly, and with so much advantage to ourselves, shall we master them. Pharaoh is said to have been given them for meat, *Psal. lxxiv. 14.* and the Canaanites will be so too. They shew, that whatever was suggested to the contrary, the advantage was clear on Israel's side. For, (1.) Though the Canaanites dwell in walled cities, they are naked, *their defence was departed from them*; that common providence which preserves the rights of nations, has abandoned them, and will be no shelter or protection to them. The other spies took notice of their strength, but those of their wickedness, and from thence inferred that God had forsaken them, and therefore *their defence was departed*. No people can be safe, when they have provoked God to leave them. (2.) Though Israel dwell in tents, they are fortified, *The Lord is with us*, and his name is a strong tower; *fear them not*. Note, While we have the presence of God with us, we need not fear the most powerful force against us. 3. They shewed them plainly, that all the danger they were in was from their own discontents, and that they would deal well enough with all their enemies, if they did not make God their enemy. On this point alone the cause would turn, *ver. 8.* *If the Lord delight in us*, as certainly he doth, and will if we do not provoke him, *he will bring us into this good land*; we shall without fail get in possession by his favour, and the light of his countenance, (*Psal. xlv. iii.*) if we do not forfeit his favour, and by our own follies turn away our own mercies. It is come to this issue, *ver. 9.* *Only rebel not ye against the Lord*. Note, Nothing can ruin sinners, but their own rebellion. If God leave them, it is because they drive him from them; and they die, because they will die. None are excluded the heavenly Canaan, but those that exclude themselves. And now, could the case have been made more plain, could it have been urged more close? But what was the effect? 2. It was all to no purpose; they were deaf to this fair reasoning; nay, they were exasperated by it, and grew more outrageous, *ver. 10.* *All the congregation bade stone them with stones*. The rulers of the congregation, and the great men, (so Bishop Patrick) ordered the common people to fall upon them, and knock their brains out. Their case was sad indeed, when their leaders thus caused them to err. Note, It is common for those whose hearts are fully set in them to do evil, to rage at those who give them good counsel. They who hate to be reformed, hate those that would reform them; and count them their enemies because they tell them the truth. Thus early did Israel begin to misuse the prophets, and stone those that were sent to them, and this was it that filled the measure of their sin, *Matth. xxiii. 37.* Stone them with stones: Why, what evil have they done? No crime can be laid to their charge; but the truth is, *those two witnesses tormented them that were obstinate in their infidelity*, *Rev. xi. 10.*

Caleb and Joshua had but just said, *The Lord is with us, fear them not*, *ver. 9.* and if Israel will not apply those encouraging words to their own fears, they that said them know how to encourage themselves with them against this enraged multitude that spake of stoning them: as David in a like case, *1 Sam. xxx. 6.* Those that cannot prevail to edify others with their counsels and comforts, should endeavour at least to edify themselves. Caleb and Joshua knew they appeared for God and his glory, and therefore doubted not but God would appear for them and their safety. And they were not disappointed, for immediately the glory of the Lord appeared, to the terror and confusion of those that were for stoning the servants of God. When they reflected upon God, *ver. 3.* his glory appeared not to silence their blasphemies, but when they threatened Caleb and Joshua, they touched the apple of his eye, and his glory appeared immediately. Note, Those who faithfully expose themselves for God, are sure to be taken under his special protection, and shall be hid from the rage of men, either under heaven or in heaven.

11. ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? 12. I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation, and mightier than they. 13. ¶ And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear it (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them.) 14. And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou LORD art among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day-time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. 15. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man; then the nations which have heard the fame of thee, will speak, saying, 16. Because the LORD was not able to bring this

this people into the land which he swore unto them; therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. 17. And now I beseech thee, let the power of my LORD be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, 18. The LORD is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. 19. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people; from Egypt, even until now.

Here is, 1. The righteous sentence which God gave against Israel for their murmuring and unbelief, which though afterwards mitigated, shews what was the desert of their sin, and the demand of injured justice; and what would have been done, if Moses had not interposed. When the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle, we may suppose Moses took it for a call to him immediately to come and attend there, as before the tabernacle was erected he went up to the mount in a like case, *Exod. xxxii. 39.* Thus while the people were studying to disgrace him, God publicly put honour upon him, as the man of his counsel. Now here we are told what God said to him there. 1. He shewed him the great evil of the people's sin, *ver. 11.* What passed between God and Israel went through the hands of Moses, when they were displeased with God they told Moses of it, *ver. 2.* When God was displeased with them he told Moses too, *revealing his secret to his servant the prophet, Amos iii. 7.* Two things God justly complains of to Moses, (1.) Their sin. They provoke me: or, as the word signifies, they reject, reproach, despise me, for *they will not believe me.* That was the bitter root which bore the gall and wormwood. It was their unbelief that made this a day of provocation in the wilderness, *Heb. iii. 8.* Note, Distrust of God, and his power and promise, is itself a very great provocation, and at the bottom of many other provocations. Unbelief is a great sin, *1 John v. 10.* and a root sin, *Heb. iii. 12.* (2.) Their continuance in it: How long will they do so! Note, The God of heaven keeps an account how long sinners persist in their provocations, and the longer it is, the more he is displeased. The aggravations of their sin were, 1. Their relation to God. *This people, a peculiar people, a professing people.* The nearer any are to God in name and profession, the more is he provoked by their sins, especially their unbelief. 2. The experience they had had of God's power and goodness, *in all the signs which he had shewed among them,* by which one would think he had effectually obliged them to trust him and follow him. The more God has done for us, the greater is the provocation if we distrust him. 2. He shewed him the sentence which justice passed upon them for it, *ver. 12.* What remains now, but that I should make a full end of them! It will be soon done, *I will smite them with the pestilence,* not leave a man of them alive, but wholly blot out their name and race, and so disinherit them, and be no more troubled with them. *Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries.* They wish to die, and let them die; and neither root nor branch be left of them. Such rebellious children deserve to be disinherited. And if it be asked, What will become of God's covenant with Abraham then? Here is an answer, It shall be preserved in the family of Moses, *I will make of thee a greater nation.* Thus, (1.) God would try Moses, whether he still continued the same affection for Israel he had formerly expressed upon a like occasion, in preferring their interests before the advancement of his own family; and it proved Moses was still of the same public spirit, and could not bear the thought of raising his own name, upon the ruin of the name of Israel. (2.) God would teach us, that he will not be a loser by the ruin of sinners. If Adam and Eve had been cut off and disinherited, he could have made another Adam and another Eve, and have glorified his mercy in them, as here in Moses, though Israel were ruined. 2. The humble intercession Moses made for them. Their sin had made a fatal breach in the wall of their defence, at which destruction had certainly entered, if Moses had not seasonably stepped in and made it good. Here he was a type of Christ, who interceded for his persecutors, and *prayed for them that despitefully used him,* leaving us an example to his own rule, *Matth. v. 44.* 1. The prayer of this petition is, in one word, *Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people,* *ver. 19.* i. e. do not bring upon them the ruin they deserve. This was Christ's prayer for those that crucified him, *Father, forgive them.* The pardon of a national sin, as such, consists in the turning away of the national punishment; and that is it for which Moses is here so earnest. The pleas are many, and strongly urged. 1. He insists most upon the plea that is taken from the glory of God, *ver. 13—16.* with this he begins, and, somewhat abruptly, taking occasion from that dreadful word, *I will disinherit them: Lord, (saith he) then the Egyptian shall hear it,* God's honour lay nearer his heart than any interests of his own. Observe, how he orders this *cuse* before God. 1. He pleads that the eyes both of Egypt and Canaan were upon them, and great expectations were raised concerning them. They could not but have heard, *that thou, Lord, art among this people,* *ver. 14.* The neighbouring countries rung of it, how much this people were the particular care of heaven, so as never any people under the sun were. 2. That if they should be cut off, great notice would be taken of it. *The Egyptians will hear it,* *ver. 13.* for they have their spies among us, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of the land, *ver. 14.* for there was great correspondence between Egypt and Canaan, though not by the way of this wilderness. If this people who have made so great a noise be all consumed, and their mighty pretensions come to nothing, but go out as a snuff, it will be told with pleasure in Gath, and published in the streets of Askelon: and what construction will they put upon it? It will be impossible to God's honour, *brutish men know not this,* *Psal. xcii. 6.* but they will impute it to the failing of God's power, and so turn it to his reproach, *ver. 16.* They will say, he slew them in the wilderness, because he was not able to bring them to Canaan, his arm being shortened, and his stock of miracles being spent. Now, Lord, let not one attribute be glorified at the expense of another; rather let mercy rejoice against judgment, than that almighty power should be impeached. Note, The best pleas in prayer are those that are taken from God's honour; for they agree with the first petition of the Lord's Prayer, *Hallowed be thy name.* *Do not disgrace the throne of thy glory.* God pleads it with himself, *Deut. xxxii. 35.* *Do not disgrace the wrath of the enemy;* and we should use it as an argument, with ourselves, to walk so in every thing as to give no occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, *1 Tim. vi. 1.* 2. He pleads God's copulation of his name at Horeb, *ver. 17, 18.* *Let the power of my Lord be great:* power is here put for pardoning mercy; it is his power over his enemies, which he should destroy them, God's power would be questioned; if he should continue and complete their salvation, notwithstanding their villainies, that is, not only from the strength of their enemies, but

from their own provocations, this would greatly magnify the divine power: what cannot he do who could make so weak a people conquerors, and such an unworthy people favourites? The more danger there is of others reproaching God's power, the more desirous we should be to see it glorified. To enforce this petition, he refers himself to the word which God had spoken, *The Lord is long suffering, and of great mercy.* God's goodness had there been spoken of as his glory; God had gloried in it, *Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.* Now here he prays, that upon this occasion he would glorify it. Note, We must take our encouragement in prayer from the word of God, upon which he hath *caused us to hope,* *Psal. cxix. 49.* Lord, be and do according as thou hast spoken; for hast thou spoken, and wilt thou not make it good? Three things God had solemnly made a declaration of, which Moses here fastens upon, and improves for the enforcing of his petition. 1. The goodness of God's nature in general; that he is long-suffering, or slow to anger, and of great mercy, not soon provoked, but tender and compassionate towards offenders. 2. His readiness in particular to pardon sin, *forgiving iniquity and transgression, sins of all sorts.* 3. His loathsomeness to proceed to extremity, even then when he doth punish. For in this sense the following words may be read. *That will by no means make quite desolate, in visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.* God had indeed said in the second commandment that he would thus visit, but here he promises not to make a full end of families, churches, and nations at once; and so it was very applicable to this occasion, for Moses cannot beg that God would not at all punish this sin, it would be too great an encouragement to rebellion, if he should set no mark of his displeasure upon it; but that he would not kill all this people as one man, *ver. 15.* He doth not ask, that they may not be corrected, but that they may not be disinherited. And this proclamation of God's name was the more apposite to his purpose, because it was made upon occasion of the pardoning of their sin in making the golden calf. This sin they were now fallen into was bad enough, but it was not idolatry. 3. He pleads past experience, *ver. 19.* *As thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt.* This seemed to make against him: why should they be forgiven any more, who after they had been so often forgiven, revolted yet more and more, and seemed hardened and encouraged in their rebellion by the lenity and patience of their God, and the frequent pardons they had obtained? and among men it would have been thought impolitically taken notice of in a request of this nature, and improveable against the petitioner: but as in other things, so in pardoning sin, God's thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, *Isa. lv. 9.* Moses looks upon it as a good plea, *Lord, forgive, as thou hast forgiven.* It will be no more a reproach to thy justice, nor no less the praise of thy mercy to forgive now, than it has been formerly. Therefore the *sins of Jacob are not consumed,* because they have to do with a God that *chungeth not,* *Mal. iii. 6.*

20. And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word: 21. But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD. 22. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice. 23. Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me, see it: 24. But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully; him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it. 25. (Now the Amalekites, and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley) To-morrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness, by the way of the Red-sea. 26. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, and unto Aaron, saying, 27. How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. 28. Say unto them, *As truly as I live,* saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you. 29. Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness: and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me. 30. Doubtless ye shall not come into the land concerning which I swore to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. 31. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. 32. But as for you, your carcases, they shall fall in this wilderness. 33. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness. 34. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days (each day for a year) shall ye bear your iniquities even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise. 35. I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.

We have here God's answer to the prayer of Moses, which sings both of mercy and judgment. It is given privately to Moses, *ver. 20—35.* and then directed to be made public to the people, *ver. 26—35.* The frequent repetitions of the same things in it, speak these resolves to be unalterable. Let us see the particulars.

1. The extremity of the sentence is recorded from *ver. 20.* *I have pardoned,* so as not to cut them all off at once, and disinherit them. See the power of prayer, and the delight God takes in putting an honour upon it. He designed a pardon, but Moses shall have the praise of obtaining it by prayer; it shall be done according to thy word; thus, as a prince, he hath power with God, and prevails. See what countenance and encouragement God

God gives to our intercessions for others, that we may be public-spirited in prayer. Here is a whole nation rescued from ruin by the effectual fervent prayer of one righteous man. See how ready God is to forgive sin, and how easy to be intreated: *Pardon, saith Moses, ver. 19. I have pardoned, saith God, ver. 20.* David found him thus swift to shew mercy, *Psal. xxxii. 5. He deals not with us after our sins.* 2. The glorifying of God's name is in the general resolved upon, *ver. 21.* It is said, it is sworn, *All the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.* Moses in his prayer had shewed a great concern for the glory of God: Let me alone, saith God, to secure that effectually, and to advance it, by this dispensation. All the world shall see how God hates sin even in his own people, and will reckon for it, and yet how gracious and merciful he is, and how slow to anger. Thus when our Saviour prayed, *Father, Glorify thy name;* he was immediately answered, *I have glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again.* John xii. 28. Note, Those that sincerely seek God's glory, may be sure of what they seek. God having turned this prayer for the glorifying of himself into a promise, we may turn it into praise, in concert with the angels, *Iſa. vi. 4. The earth is full of his glory.* 3. The sin of this people which provoked God to proceed against them is here aggravated, *ver. 22 and 27.* It is not made worse than really it was, but is shewed to be exceeding sinful. It was an evil congregation, each bad, but all together in congregation, very bad. 1. They tempted God, tempted his power, whether he could help them in their straits, his goodness whether he would, and his faithfulness whether his promise would be performed. They tempted his justice whether he would resent their provocations, and punish them or no. They dared him; and in effect challenged him, as God doth the idols, *Iſa. xli. 23. to do good, or do evil.* 2. They murmured against him. This is much intimated on, *ver. 27.* As they questioned what he would do, so they quarreled with him for every thing he did or had done; continually fretting and finding fault. It doth not appear that they murmured at any of the laws or ordinances that God gave them, they proved a heavy yoke, but they murmured at the conduct they were under, and the provision made for them. Note, It is much easier to bring ourselves to the external services of religion, and observe all the formalities of devotion, than to live a life of dependance upon and submission to the divine providence in the course of our conversation. 3. They did this after they had seen God's miracles in Egypt, and in the wilderness, *ver. 2.* They would not believe their own eyes, which were witnesses for God, that he was in the midst of them of a truth. 4. They had repeated the provocations ten times, i. e. very often: the Jewish writers reckon this exactly the tenth time that the body of the congregation had provoked God. First, at the Red sea, *Exod. xiv. 11.* In Marah, *Exod. xv. 23.* In the wilderness of Sin, *Exod. xvi. 2.* Twice about manna, *Exod. xvi. 20—27.* At Rephidim, *chap. xvii. 1.* The golden calf. Then at Taberah; then at Kibroth-haavah, *Numb. xi.* And so this was the tenth. Note, God keeps an account how often we repeat our provocations, and will sooner or later let them in order before us. 5. They had not hearkened to his voice, though he had again and again admonished them of their sin. 4. The sentence passed upon them for this sin. (1.) That they should not see the promised land, *ver. 23. nor come unto it, ver. 30. He swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest.* *Psal. xcvi. 11.* Note, Unbelief of the promise, is a forfeiture of the benefit of it. Those that despise the pleasant land shall be shut out of it. The promise of God should be fulfilled to their posterity, but not to them. (2.) That they should immediately turn back into the wilderness, *ver. 25.* Their next remove shall be a retreat; they must face about, and instead of going forward to Canaan, on the very borders of which they now were, they must withdraw towards the Red sea again. *To-morrow turn ye.* That is, very shortly you shall be brought back to that vast howling wilderness which you are so weary of. And it is time to shift for your own safety, for the Amalekites lie in wait in the valley, ready to attack you, if you march forward; of them they had been distrustfully afraid, *chap. xiii. 29.* and now with them God justly frightened them. *The fear of the wicked shall come upon him.* (3.) That all those who are now grown up to men's estate should die in the wilderness, not all at once, but by degrees. They wished they might die in the wilderness, and God said, Amen, to the passionate wish, and made their sin their ruin, *shared them in the words of their mouth, and caused their own tongue to fall upon them;* took them at their word, and determined that their carcases should fall in the wilderness, *ver. 28, 29.* and again, *ver. 32—35.* See with what contempt they are spoken of, now they had by their sin made themselves vile; the mighty men of valour were but carcases, when the Spirit of the Lord was departed from them. They were all as dead men. Their fathers had such a value for Canaan, that they desired to have their dead bodies carried thither to be buried, in token of their dependance of God's promise, that they should have that land for a possession; but these having despised that good land, and disbelieved the promise of it, shall not have the honour to be buried in it, but shall have their graves in the wilderness. (4.) That, in pursuance of this sentence, they should wander to and fro in the wilderness, like travellers that have lost themselves, for forty years; i. e. so long as to make it full forty years from their coming out of Egypt to their entrance into Canaan *ver. 33, 34.* Thus long they were kept wandering. 1. To answer the number of the days in which the spies were searching the land. They were content to wait forty days for the testimony of men, because they could not take God's word; and therefore justly are they kept forty years waiting for the performance of God's promise. 2. That hereby they might be brought to repentance, and find mercy with God in the other world, whatever became of them in this. Now they had time to bethink themselves, and to consider their ways; and the inconveniences of the wilderness would help to humble them, and prove them, and show them what was in their heart, *Deut. viii. 2.* Thus long they bore their iniquities, feeling the weight of God's wrath in the punishment. They were made to groan under the burden of their own sin that brought it upon them, which was too heavy for them to bear. 3. That they might sensibly feel what a dangerous thing it is for God's covenant people to break with him. *Ye shall know my breach of promise;* both the causes of it, that it is procured by your sin, for God never leaves any till they first leave him, and the consequences of it, that it will produce your ruin; you are quite undone which you are thrown out of covenant. 4. That a new generation might in this time be raised up, which could not be done all of a sudden. And the children being brought up under the tokens of God's displeasure against their fathers, and so bearing their whoredoms, i. e. the punishment of their sins, especially their idolatry about the golden calf, which God now remembered against them, might take warning not to tread in the steps of their fathers' disobedience. And their wandering so long in the wilderness, would make Canaan at last the more welcome to them. It should seem, that upon occasion of this sentence, Moses penned the ninetyeth Psalm, which is very apposite to the present state of Israel, and where they are taught to pray, that since the sentence could not be reversed, it might be sanctified, and they might learn to apply their hearts unto wisdom. (5.) The mercy that was mixed with this severe sentence. 1. Mercy to Caleb

and Joshua; that though they should wander with the rest in the wilderness yet they, and they only, of all that were now above twenty years old, should survive the years of banishment, and live to enter Canaan. Caleb only is spoken of, *ver. 24.* and a particular mark of honour put upon him, both (1.) In the character given of him, he had another spirit, different from the rest of the spies, an after-spirit, which furnished him with second thoughts, and he followed the Lord fully, kept close to his duty, and went through with it though deserted and threatened; and, (2.) In recompence promised to him, *him will I bring in due time into the land whereunto he went.* Note, 1. It ought to be the great care and endeavour of every one of us to follow the Lord fully. We must, in a course of obedience to God's will, and service to his honour, follow him universally without dividing, uprightly without dissembling, cheerfully without disputing, and constantly without declining; and this is following him fully. 2. Those that would follow God fully must have another spirit, another from the spirit of the world, and another from what their own spirit has been. They must have the spirit of Caleb. 3. They that follow God fully in times of general apostasy, God will own them, and honour them by singular preferential in times of general calamity. The heavenly Canaan shall be the everlasting inheritance of those that follow the Lord fully. When Caleb is again mentioned, *ver. 30.* Joshua stands with him compassed with the same favours, and crowned with the same honours, having stood with him in the same services. 2. Mercy to the children, even of these rebels. They should have a seed preserved, and Canaan secured to that seed, *ver. 31. Your little ones, now under twenty years old, which you in your unbelief said shall be a prey them will I bring in.* They had invidiously charged God with a design to ruin their children, *ver. 3.* But God will let them know that he can put a difference between the guilty and the innocent, and cut them off without touching their children. Thus the promise made to Abraham, though it seemed to fail for a time, was kept from failing for evermore; and though God chastened their transgression with a rod, yet his loving kindness he would not utterly take away.

36. And the men which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land; 37. Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD. 38. But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still. 39. And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly. 40. ¶ And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned. 41. And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper. 42. Go not up, for the LORD is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. 43. For the Amalekites, and the Canaanites are there before you; and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD; therefore the LORD will not be with you. 44. But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless, the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp. 45. Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah.

Here is, 1. The sudden death of the ten evil spies. While the sentence was in passing upon the people, before it was published, they died of the plague before the Lord, *ver. 36, 37.* Now, 1. God hereby shewed his particular displeasure against them, who sinned, and made Israel to sin. (1.) They sinned themselves, in bringing up a slander upon the land of promise. Note, Those greatly provoke God who misrepresent religion, cast reproach upon it, and raise prejudices in men's minds against it, or give occasion to those to do so who seek occasion. Those that represent the service of God as mean and despicable, melancholy and uncomfortable, hard and impracticable, needless and unprofitable, being up an evil report upon the good land, pervert the right ways of the Lord, and in effect give him the lie. (2.) They made Israel to sin. They designedly made all the congregation murmur against God. Note, Ring-leaders in sin may expect to fall under particular marks of God's wrath, who will severely reckon for the blood of souls, which is thus spilt. 2. God hereby shewed what he could have done with the whole congregation; and gave an earnest of the execution of the sentence now passed upon them. He that thus cut off one of a tribe, could have cut off their whole tribes suddenly, and would do it gradually. Note, The remarkable deaths of notorious sinners are earnest of the final perdition of ungodly men. *2 Pet. ii. 5, 6.* Thus the wrath of God is revealed, that sinners may hear and fear. 2. The special preservation of Caleb and Joshua, *ver. 38. they lived still.* It is likely all the twelve spies stood together, for the eyes of all Israel were now upon them; and therefore it is taken notice of as very remarkable, and which could not but be affecting to the whole congregation, that when the ten evil spies fell down dead of the plague, a malignant infectious distemper, yet these two that stood among them lived, and were well. God hereby confirmed their testimony, and put those to confusion that spake of stoning them. He likewise gave them an assurance of their continual preservation in the wilderness, when thousands should fall on their right hand and on their left, *Psal. xci. 7.* Death never misseth his mark, nor takes any by oversight that were designed for life, though in the midst of those that were to die. 3. The publication of the sentence to all the people, *ver. 39.* He told them all what the decree was which was gone forth concerning them, and which could not be reversed; that they must all die in the wilderness, and Canaan must be reserved for the next generation. It was a very great disappointment, we may well think, to Moses himself, who longed to be in Canaan, as well as to all the people; yet he acquiesced, but they wept and mourned greatly. The assurance Moses had of God's being glorified by this sentence gave him satisfaction, while their conscience of their own guilt, and their having procured it to themselves, gave them the greatest vexation. They wept for nothing, *ver. 1.* and now they have cause given them to weep; so justly are murmurers made mourners. If they had mourned for the sin, when they were

were faithfully reprov'd for it, ver. 9. the sentence had been prevented; but now they mourned for the judgment only, it came too late, and did them no service; they found no place for repentance, though they sought it carefully with tears, Heb. xii. 17. Such mourning as this there is in hell, but the tears will not quench the flames, nor cool the tongue. 4. The foolish fruitless attempt of some of the Israelites to enter Canaan, notwithstanding the sentence. 1. They were now earnest to go forward towards Canaan, ver. 40. They were up early, mustered all their force, got together in a body, and begged of Moses to lead them on against the enemy, and now there is no more talk among them of making a captain to return into Egypt. They confess their fault, *we have sinned*; they profess reformation, *Lo, we be here, and will go up*. They now desire the land which they had despised, and put a confidence in the promise which they had distrusted. Thus when God judgeth, he will overcome, and first or last will convince sinners of the evil of their ungodly deeds, and hard speeches, and force them to recal their own words. But though God was glorified by this recantation of theirs, they were not benefited by it, because it came too late. The decree was gone forth, the consumption was determined, they did not seek the Lord while he might be found, and now he would not be found. O, if men would but be as earnest for heaven while their day of grace lasts, as they will be when it is over, would be as solicitous to provide themselves with oil while the bridegroom tarrys, as they will be when the bridegroom cometh, how well were it for them! 2. Moses utterly disallows their motion, and forbids the expedition they were meditating, ver. 41, 42, 43. *Go not up*. (1.) He gives them warning of the sin, it is *transgressing the commandment of the Lord*, who had expressly ordered them when they did move, to move back towards the Red sea. Note, That which has been duty in its season, when it comes to be mis-timed may be turned into sin. It is true, the command he refers to was in the nature of a punishment, but he that has not obeyed the law, is obliged to submit to the penalty, for the Lord is our judge, as well as law-giver. (2.) He gives them warning of the danger, *It shall not prosper, never expect it*. Note, It is folly to promise ourselves success in that which we undertake contrary to the mind of God. The Canaanites are before you to attack you, and the Lord is not among you, to protect you, and fight for you, and therefore look to yourselves that ye be not smitten before your enemies. Those that are out of the way of their duty are from under God's protection, and go at their peril. It is dangerous going there where we cannot expect God should go along with us. Nay, he plainly foresees and foretells that defeat, *ye shall fall by the sword of the Amalekites and Canaanites*, who were to have fallen by their sword, *because ye are turned away from the Lord*, from following the conduct of his precept and promise, *therefore the Lord will not be with you*. Note, God will certainly leave those that leave him; and those that are left of him lie exposed to all misery. 3. They venture notwithstanding. Never was people so perverse, and so desperately resolved in every thing to walk contrary to God. God bid them go, and they would not; he forbid them, and they would. Thus is the carnal mind enmity to God: ver. 44. *They presumed to go up unto the hill-top*. Here (1.) They struggled against the sentence of divine justice, and would press on in defiance of it. (2.) They slighted the tokens of God's presence, for they would go, though they left Moses and the ark of the covenant behind them. They had distrusted God's strength, and now they presume upon their own without him. 4. The expedition speeds accordingly, ver. 4, 5. The enemy had posted themselves upon the top of the hill, to make good that pass against the invaders, and being informed by their scouts of their approach, sallied out upon them, and defeated them, and it is likely many of the Israelites were killed. Now the sentence began to be executed, that their carcases should fall in the wilderness. Note, That affair can never end well that begins with sin. The way to obtain peace with our friends, and success against our enemies, is to make God our friend, and keep ourselves in his love. The Jews, like these their ancestors, when they had rejected Christ's righteousness, attempted to establish their own, and it sped as this here.

C H A P. XV.

This chapter, which is mostly concerning sacrifice and offering, comes in between the story of two rebellions, one chap. xiv. the other chap. xvi. to signify that these legal institutions were typical of the gifts which Christ was to receive even for the rebellious, Plal. xlviii. 18. In the foregoing chapter, upon Israel's provocation, God had determined to destroy them; and in token of his wrath, had sentenced them to perish in the wilderness. But upon Moses's intercession he said, I have pardoned; and in token of that mercy, in this chapter, he repents and explains some of the laws concerning offerings, to show that he was reconciled to them, notwithstanding the severe dispensation they were under, and would not unchurch them. Here is, 1. The law concerning the meat-offerings and drink-offerings, ver. 1—12. both for Israelites and for strangers, ver. 13—16. and a law concerning the heave-offerings of the first of their dough, ver. 17—21. 2. The law concerning sacrifices for sins of ignorance, ver. 22—29. 3. The punishment of presumptuous sins, ver. 30, 31. and an instance given in the sabbath-breaker, ver. 32—36. 4. A law concerning fringes, for memorandums upon the borders of their garments, ver. 37—41.

1. **A**ND the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you, 3. And will make an offering by fire unto the LORD, a burnt-offering, or a sacrifice in performing a vow, or in a free-will offering, or in your solemn feasts, to make a sweet savour unto the LORD, of the herd, or of the flock: 4. Then shall he that offereth his offering unto the LORD, bring a meat-offering of a tenth-deal of flour, mingled with the fourth part of an hin of oil. 5. And the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink-offering shalt thou prepare with the burnt-offering, or sacrifice, for one lamb. 6. Or for a ram, thou shalt prepare for a meat-offering, two tenth deals of flour mingled with the third part of an hin of oil. 7. And for a drink-offering, thou shalt offer the third part of an hin of wine, for a sweet savour unto the LORD. 8. And when thou

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preparest a bullock for a burnt-offering, or for a sacrifice in performing a vow, or peace-offerings unto the LORD: 9. Then shall he bring with a bullock a meat-offering of three tenth-deals of flour mingled with half an hin of oil. 10. And thou shalt bring for a drink-offering half an hin of wine, for an offering made by fire of a sweet savour unto the LORD. 11. Thus it shall be done for one bullock, or for one ram, or for a lamb, or a kid. 12. According to the number that ye shall prepare, so shall ye do to every one, according to their number. 13. All that are born of the country shall do these things after this manner, in offering an offering made by fire of a sweet savour unto the LORD. 14. And if a stranger sojourn with you, or whosoever be among you in your generations, and will offer an offering made by fire of a sweet savour unto the LORD: as ye do, so he shall do. 15. One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance for ever in your generations: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD. 16. One law, and one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you. 17. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 18. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land whither I bring you, 19. Then it shall be, that when ye eat of the bread of the land, ye shall offer up an heave-offering unto the LORD. 20. Ye shall offer up a cake of the first of your dough, for an heave-offering: as ye do the heave-offering of the threshing-floor, so shall ye heave it. 21. Of the first of your dough ye shall give unto the LORD, an heave-offering in your generations.

Here is, 1. Full instructions given concerning the meat-offerings and drink-offerings, which were appendages to all the sacrifices of animals. The beginning of this law is very encouraging, *When ye come into the land of your habitation which I give unto you*, then you shall do so and so, ver. 2. This was a plain intimation, not only that God was reconciled to them, notwithstanding the sentence he had passed upon them, but that he would secure the promised land to their seed, notwithstanding their aptness to rebel against him. They might think some time or other they should be guilty of a misdemeanor, that would be fatal to them, and would exclude them for ever, as the law had done for one generation; but this intimates an assurance, that they should be kept from provoking God to such a degree as would amount to a forfeiture; for this statute takes it for granted that there were some of them that should in due time come into Canaan. The meat-offerings were of two sorts; some were offered alone by themselves, and we have the law concerning those, Lev. ii. 1. Others were added to the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and constantly attended them, and about those direction is here given. It was requisite, since the sacrifices of acknowledgment, (intanced in ver. 3.) were intended as the food of God's table, there should be a constant provision of bread, oil, and wine, whatever the flesh-meat was. The caterers or purveyors for Solomon's temple, provided *fine flour*, 1 Kings iv. 22. And it was fit God should keep a good house, and that his table should be furnished with bread as well as flesh, and his cup should run over. In my Father's house there is bread enough.

Now the intent of this law is to direct what proportion the meat-offering and drink-offering should bear to the several sacrifices to which they were annexed. If the sacrifice was a lamb, or a kid, then the meat-offering must be a tenth-deal of flour, that is, an omer, which contained about five pints, this must be mingled with oil, the fourth part of a hin, and a hin contained about five quarts, and the drink-offering must be the same quantity of wine, about a quart and a half pint, ver. 3, 4, 5. If it was a ram, the meat-offering was doubled, two tenth-deals of flour, above five quarts, and a third part of a hin of oil, (which was to them as butter is to us) mingled with it; and the same quantity of wine for a drink-offering, ver. 6, 7. If the sacrifice was a bullock, the meat-offering was to be trebled, three omers, with five pints of oil, and the same quantity of wine for a drink-offering, ver. 8, 9, 10. And thus for each sacrifice, whether offered by a particular person, or at the common charge. Note, Our religious services should be governed, as by other rules, so by the rules of proportion. 2. Natives and strangers are here set upon a level, in this as in other matters, ver. 13—16. *One law shall be for you and for the stranger* that is profelyted to the Jewish religion. Now, 1. This was an invitation to the Gentiles to become profelytes, and to embrace the faith and worship of the true God. In civil things there was a difference between strangers and true born Israelites, but not in the things of God; as ye are so shall the stranger be before the Lord, for with him there is no respect of persons. See *Ista*. lvi. 3. 2. This was an obligation upon the Jews to be kind to strangers, and not to oppress them, because they saw them owned and accepted of God. Communion in religion is a great engagement to mutual affection, and should slay all enmities. 3. It was a mortification to the pride of the Jews, who were apt to be puffed up with their birthright privileges. We are Abraham's seed; God lets them know, that the sons of the stranger were as welcome to him as the sons of Jacob; no man's birth or parentage shall turn either to his advantage or his prejudice in his acceptance with God. This likewise intimated, that as believing strangers should be accounted Israel, so unbelieving Israelites should be accounted strangers. 4. It was a happy preface of the calling of the Gentiles, and the admission of them into the church. If the law made so little difference between Jew and Gentile, much less would the gospel make, which broke down the partition wall, and reconciled both to God in one sacrifice, without the observance of the legal ceremonies. 3. A law for the offering the first of the dough unto the Lord. This, as the former, goes upon the comfortable supposition of their being *come into the promised land*, ver. 18. Now they lived upon manna, they needed not such express acknowledgment of God's title to their daily bread, and their dependence upon him for it, the thing spoke itself; but in Canaan, where they should eat the fruit of their own industry, God required that he should be owned as their landlord, and their great benefactor. They must not only offer him the first fruits and tenths of the corn in their fields, those had been already reserved, but when they had in their houses, in their

3 X kneading

kneading troughs, when it was almost ready to be set upon their tables, God must have a further tribute of acknowledgment, part of their dough (the Jews lay a fortieth part at least of the whole lump) must be heaved or offered up to God, ver. 20, 21. and the priest must have it for the use of his family. Thus they must own their dependance upon God for their daily bread, even when they had it in the house with them; they must then wait on God for the comfortable use of it, for we read of that which was brought home, and yet God did blow upon it; and it came to little, *Hag. i. 9.* Christ hath taught us to pray, not give us this year our yearly harvest, but give us this day our daily bread. God by this law said to the people, as the prophet long after said to the widow of Serepta, *1 Kings xvii. 13.* Only make me ther eaf a little cake first. This offering was expressly kept up by the laws of Ezekiel's visionary temple, and it is a commandment with promise of family merces, *Ezek. xlv. 30.* Ye shall give unto the priest the first of your dough, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house; for when God has had his dues out of our estates, we may expect the comfort of what falls to our share.

22. ¶ And if ye have erred, and not observed all these commandments which the LORD hath spoken unto Moses, 23. Even all that the LORD hath commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day that the LORD commanded Moses, and henceforward among your generations: 24. Then it shall be, if ought be committed by ignorance, without the knowledge of the congregation; that all the congregation shall offer one young bullock for a burnt-offering, for a sweet savour unto the LORD, with his meat-offering, and his drink-offering, according to the manner, and one kid of the goats for a sin-offering. 25. And the priest shall make an atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them, for it is ignorance: and they shall bring their offering, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD, and their sin-offering before the LORD for their ignorance. 26. And it shall be forgiven all the congregation of the children of Israel, and the stranger that sojourneth among them: seeing all the people were in ignorance. 27. ¶ And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she-goat of the first-year for a sin-offering. 28. And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him: and it shall be forgiven him. 29. You shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both for him that is born amongst the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them.

We have here the laws concerning sacrifices for sins of ignorance; the Jews understood it of idolatry, or false worship, through the error of their teachers; the case here supposed is, that ye have not observed all these commandments, ver. 22, 23. If they had failed in the offerings of their acknowledgment, and had not brought them according to the law, then they must bring an offering of atonement; yea, though the omission had been through forgetfulness or mistake. If they failed in one part of the ceremony, they must make it up by the observance of another part, which was in the nature of a remedial law.

1. The case is put of a national sin, committed through ignorance, and become customary through a vulgar error, ver. 24. the congregation, i. e. the body of the people, for so it is explained, ver. 25. All the congregation of the children of Israel. The ceremonial observances were so numerous, and so various, that it might easily be supposed, some of them by degrees would be forgotten and disused, as particularly that immediately before concerning the heave-offering of their dough: now if in process of time, upon consulting the law, there appears to have been a general neglect of that or any other appointment, then a sacrifice must be offered for the whole congregation, and the oversight shall be forgiven, ver. 25, 26. and not punished, as it deserved, with some national judgment. The offering of the sacrifice according to the manner, or ordinance, plainly refers to a former statute, which this is the repetition of; and the same bullock which is there called a sin-offering, *Lev. iv. 13—21.* is here called a burnt-offering, ver. 24. because it was wholly burnt, though not upon the altar, yet without the camp. And here is the addition of a kid of the goats for a sin-offering. According to this law we find that Hezekiah made atonement for the errors of his father's reign, by seven bullocks, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven he-goats, which he offered as a sin-offering for the kingdom, and for the sanctuary, and for Judah, *2 Chron. xxix. 21.* and for all Israel, ver. 24. And we find the like done after the return out of captivity, *Ezra viii. 35.* 2. It is likewise supposed to be the case of a particular person. If any soul sin through ignorance, ver. 27. neglecting any part of his duty, he must bring his offering, as was appointed, *Lev. iv. 27, &c.* Thus atonement shall be made for the soul that sins ignorantly, when he sins by ignorance, ver. 28.

Observe, 1. Sins committed ignorantly need to have atonement made for them; for though ignorance will excuse, it will not justify those that might have known their Lord's will, and did not. David prays to be cleansed from his secret faults, i. e. those sins which he himself was not aware of, the errors he did not understand, *Psal. xix. 12.* 2. Sins committed ignorantly shall be forgiven, through Christ the great sacrifice, who when he offered up himself once for all upon the cross, seemed to explain the intention of his offering, in that prayer, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* And Paul seems to allude to this law concerning sins of ignorance, *1 Tim. i. 13.* I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly and in an unbelief. And it looked favourably upon the Gentiles, that this law of atoning for sins of ignorance is expressly made to extend to those who were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, ver. 29. but supposed to be profelytes of righteousness. Thus the blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles.

30. ¶ But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously (whether he be born in the land, or a stranger) the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. 31. Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his command-

ment; that soul shall utterly be cut off: his iniquity shall be upon him, 32. ¶ And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath-day. 33. And they that found him gathering sticks, brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. 34. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. 35. And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. 36. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses.

Here is, 1. The general doom passed upon presumptuous sinners. 1. These are to be reckoned presumptuous sinners that sin with a high hand, as the original phrase is, ver. 30. i. e. that avowedly confront God's authority, and set up their own lust in competition with it; that sin for sinning's sake, in contradiction to the precept of the law, and in defiance of the penalty; that fight against God, and dare him to do his worst; see *Job xv. 25.* It is not only to sin against knowledge, but to sin designedly against God's will and glory. 2. Sins thus committed are exceeding sinful. He that thus breaks the commandment, (1.) Hereproucheth the Lord, ver. 30. he faith the worst he can of him, and most unjustly. The language of presumptuous sin is, that eternal truth is not fit to be believed, the Lord of all not fit to be obeyed, and almighty power not fit to be either feared or trusted. It imputes folly to infinite wisdom, and iniquity to the righteous Judge of Heaven and earth; such is the malignity of wilful sin. (2.) He despiseth the word of the Lord, ver. 31. There are those who in many instances come short of fulfilling the word, and yet have a great value for it, and count the law honourable; but presumptuous sinners despise it, thinking themselves too great and too good, and too wise to be ruled by it. What is the almighty that we should serve him? Whatever the sin itself is, it is contumacy that incurs the anathema. It is rebellion added to the sin, that is as witchcraft, and stubbornness as idolatry. 3. The sentence passed on such is dreadful. There remains no sacrifice for those sins, the law provided none, that soul shall be cut off from among his people, ver. 30. utterly cut off, ver. 31. and that God may be for ever justified, and the sinner for ever confounded, his iniquity shall be upon him; and there needs no more to sink him to the lowest hell. Thus the Jewish doctors understand it, that the iniquity shall cleave to the soul, after it is cut off, and that man shall give an account of his sin at the great day of judgment. Perhaps the kind of the offence might be such as did not expole the offender to the censure of the civil magistrate, but if it were done presumptuously, God himself would take the punishment of it into his own hands, and into them it is a fearful thing to fall. In the New Testament we find the like sentence of exclusion from all benefit, by the great sacrifice, passed upon the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and a total apostasy from Christianity. See *Matth. xii. 32.* and *Heb. x. 26.* which refers to this here. 2. A particular instance of presumption in the sin of sabbath breaking. 1. The offence was gathering sticks on the sabbath-day, ver. 32. which it is likely were designed to make a fire of, whereas they were commanded to bake and seeth what they had occasion for the day before, *Ezek. xvi. 23.* This seemed but a small offence, but it was a violation of the law of the sabbath, and so was an implicit contempt of the Creator, to whose honour the sabbath was dedicated, and an incursion upon the whole law, which the sabbath was intended as a hedge about. And it appears by the context to have been done presumptuously, and in affront both to the law, and to the law-maker. 2. The offender was secured, ver. 33, 34. They that found him gathering sticks, in their zeal for the honour of the sabbath, brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation; which intimates, that it being the sabbath-day, the congregation was at that time gathered to Moses and Aaron, to receive instruction from them, and to join with them in religious worships. It seems even common Israelites, though there was much amiss among them, yet would not contentedly see the sabbath profaned, which was a good sign that they had not quite forsaken God, nor were utterly forsaken of him. 3. God was consulted, because it was not declared what should be done to him. The law had already made the profanation of the sabbath a capital crime, *Exod. xxxi. 14. chap. xxxv. 2.* but they were in doubt, either concerning the offence, whether this that he had done should be deemed a profanation of the sabbath or no; or concerning the punishment, what death he should die. God was the judge, and before him they brought this cause. 4. Sentence was passed; the prisoner was adjudged a sabbath-breaker according to the intent of that law, and as such he must be put to death; and to shew how great the crime was, and how displeasing to God, and that others might hear and fear, and not do in like manner presumptuously, that death is appointed him which was looked upon as most terrible, he must be stoned with stones, ver. 35. Note, God is jealous for the honour of his sabbaths, and will not hold them guiltless, whatever men do, that profane them. 5. Execution was done pursuant to the sentence, ver. 36. He was stoned to death by the congregation. As many as could were employed in the execution, that they at least might be afraid of breaking the sabbath, who had thrown a stone at this sabbath breaker. This intimates that the open profanation of the sabbath is a sin which ought to be punished and restrained by the civil magistrates, who, as far as overt-acts go, is keeper of both tables. See *Neh. xiii. 17.* One would think there could be no great harm in gathering a few sticks, on what day soever it was, but God intended the exemplary punishment of him that did so, for a standing warning to us all, to make conscience of keeping holy the sabbath.

37. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 38. Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments, throughout their generations, and that they put on the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue. 39. And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them: and that ye seek not after your own heart, and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: 40. That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God. 41. I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the LORD your God.

Provision had been just now made by the law for the pardon of sins of ignorance and infirmity, now here is an expedient provided for the preventing of such sins. They are ordered to make fringes upon the borders of their garments, which were to be memorandums to them of their duty, that they might not sin through forgetfulness.

1. The sign appointed is a fringe of silk, or thread, or worsted, or the garment itself ravalled at the bottom, and a blue ribband bound on the top of it to keep it tight, *ver. 38.* The Jews being a peculiar people, they were thus distinguished from their neighbours in their dress, as well as in their diet, and taught by such little instances of singularity, not to be conformed to the way of the heathen in greater things. Thus likewise they proclaimed themselves Jews wherever they were, as those that were not ashamed of God and his law. Our Saviour being made under the law wore these fringes; hence we read of the hem or border of his garment, *Matth. ix. 20.* These borders the Pharisees enlarged, that they might be thought more holy and devout than other people. Yet the phylacteries were different things, those were their own invention, the fringes were a divine institution. The Jews of this day wear them, saying, when they put them on, *Blessed be he who sanctified us unto himself, and commanded us to wear fringes.* 2. The intention of it, was to mind them that they were a peculiar people. They were not appointed for the trimming and adorning of their clothes, but to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance, *2 Pet. iii. 1.* That they might look upon the fringe, and remember the commandments. Many look upon their ornaments to feed their pride, but they must look upon these ornaments to awaken their consciences to a sense of their duty, that their religion might constantly beset them, and they might carry it about with them, as they did their clothes, wherever they went. If they were tempted to sin, the fringe would be a monitor to them, not to break God's commandments: if a duty were forgotten to be done in its season, the fringe would mind them of it. This institution, though it be not an imposition upon us, is an instruction to us, always to remember the commandments of the Lord our God, that we may do them. To treasure them up in our memories, and to apply them to particular cases as there is occasion to use them. It was intended particularly to be a preservation from idolatry, that ye seek not after your own heart, and your own eyes, in your religious worship. Yet it may extend also to the whole conversation, for nothing is more contrary to God's honour, and our own true interest, than to walk in the way of our heart, and in the sin of our eyes; for the imagination of the heart is evil, and so is the lust of the eyes.

After the repetition of some ceremonial appointments, the chapter closeth with the repetition of that great and fundamental law of religion, *Be holy unto your God;* purged from sin, and sincerely devoted to his service; and that great reason for all the commandments, is again and again inculcated, *I am the Lord your God.* Did we more firmly believe, and more frequently and seriously consider, that God is the Lord, and our God and Redeemer, we should see ourselves bound in duty, interest, and gratitude, to keep all his commandments.

C H A P. XVI.

The date of the history contained in this chapter is altogether uncertain. Probably, these mutinies happened after their remove back again, from Kadesh-barnea, when they were fixed (if I may so speak) for their wandering in the wilderness, and began to look upon that as their settlement. Presently after new laws given, follows the story of a new rebellion, as if sin took occasion from the commandment to become more exceeding sinful. Here is, 1. A daring and dangerous rebellion raised against Moses and Aaron by Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, *ver. 1—15.* 1. Korah and his accomplices contend for the priesthood against Aaron, *ver. 3.* and Moses reasons with them, and appeals to God for a decision of the controversy, *ver. 4—11.* 2. Dathan and Abiram quarrel with Moses, and refuse to obey his summons, which greatly grieves him, *ver. 12—15.* 3. A solemn appearance of the pretenders to the priesthood before God, according to order, and a public appearance of the glory of the Lord, which had consumed the whole congregation, if Moses and Aaron had not interceded, *ver. 16—22.* 4. The deciding of the controversy, and the crushing of rebellion, by the cutting off of the rebels. 1. Those in their tents were buried alive, *ver. 23—34.* 2. Those at the door of the tabernacle were consumed by fire, *ver. 35.* and their censers preserved for a memorial, *ver. 37—40.* 4. A new insurrection of the people, *ver. 40—43.* 1. God stayed the insurrection by a plague, *ver. 45.* 2. Aaron stayed the plague by offering incense, *ver. 46—50.* The manner and method of recording this story, plainly speaks the ferment very high.

1. **N**OW Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi; and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men, 2. And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown. 3. And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, *Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift you up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?* 4. And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face: 5. And he spake unto Korah, and unto all his company, saying, Even to-morrow the LORD will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen, will he cause to come near unto him. 6. This do; Take your censers, Korah, and all his company; 7. And put fire therein, and put incense in them before the LORD to-morrow: and it shall be that the man whom the LORD doth choose, he shall be holy; ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi. 8. And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: 9. Seemeth it but a small

thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself, to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation, to minister unto them: 10. And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also? 11. For which cause both thou, and all thy company are gathered together against the LORD: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him.

Here is, 1. An account of the rebels, who and what they were, not, as formerly, the mixed multitude, and the dregs of the people, who are therefore never named, but men of distinction and quality, that made a figure. Korah was the ring-leader, he formed and headed the faction, therefore it is called the gainaying of Korah, *Jude 11.* He was cousin-german to Moses, they were brother's children, yet the nearness of the relation could not restrain him from being insolent and rude to Moses. Think it not strange if a man's foes be *they of his own house.* With him joined Dathan and Abiram, chief men of the tribe of Reuben, the eldest son of Jacob. Probably Korah was disgusted both at the preferment of Aaron to the priesthood, and the constituting of Elizaphan to be head of the Kohathites, *Numb. iii. 30.* and perhaps the Reubenites were angry that the tribe of Judah had the first post of honour in the camp. On is mentioned, *ver. 1.* as one of the heads of the faction, but never after in the whole story; either because, as some think, he repented and left them, or because he did not make himself so remarkable as Dathan and Abiram did. The Kohathites encamped on the same side of the tabernacle that the Reubenites did, which perhaps gave Korah an opportunity of drawing them in; whence the Jews say, *Woe to the wicked man, and woe to his neighbour, who is in danger of being infected by him.* And these being themselves topping men, they seduced into the conspiracy two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, *ver. 2.* probably, they were first-born, or at least heads of families, who, before the elevation of Aaron, had themselves ministered in holy things. Note, The pride, ambition, and emulation of great men, has always been the occasion of a great deal of mischief both in churches and states. God by his grace make great men humble, and so give peace in our time, O Lord. Famous men, and men of renown, as these here are described to be, were the great sinners of the old world, *Gen. vi. 4.* The same and renown they had did not content them, they were high, but would be higher, and thus the famous men became infamous. 2. The rebels remonstrance, *ver. 3.* that which they quarrel with, is the settlement of the priesthood upon Aaron and his family, which they think an honour too great for Moses to give, and Aaron to accept, and so they are both charged with an usurpation. *Ye take too much upon you;* or, Let it suffice you to be upon a level with your neighbours, who are all holy, all as good as you, and therefore ought to be as great. Or, Let it suffice you to have domineered thus long, and now think of resigning your places to those that have as good a title to them, and are as well able to manage them. 1. They proudly boast of the holiness of the congregation, and the presence of God in it. They are *holy, every one of them,* and as fit to be employed in offering sacrifice as Aaron is, and as masters of families formerly were; and the Lord is among them, to direct and own them. Small reason they had to brag of the people's purity, or of God's favour, since the people had been so frequently and so lately polluted from sin, and were now under the marks of God's displeasure, which should have made them thankful for priests to mediate between them and God, but instead of that they envy them. 3. They unjustly charge Moses and Aaron with taking the honour they had to themselves, whereas it was evident beyond contradiction that they were called of God to it, *Heb. v. 4.* So that either they would have no priests at all, nor any government, none to preside either in civil or sacred things, none over the congregation, none above it; or they would not acquiesce in that constitution of the government which God had appointed. See here, (1.) What spirit levellers are of, and those that despise dominions, and resist the powers that God has set over them; they are proud, envious, ambitious, turbulent, wicked, and unreasonable men. (2.) What usage even the best and most useful men may expect, even from those that have been serviceable to. If they be represented as usurpers that have the best titles, and they as tyrants that govern best, let them know that Moses and Aaron were thus abused. 3. Moses's resentment of this remonstrance, when it was published against him. How did he take it? 1. He fell on his face, *ver. 4.* as before, *chap. xiv. 5.* Thus he shewed how willing he would have been to yield to them, and how gladly he would have resigned his government, if it would have consisted with his duty to God, and his fidelity to the trust reposed in him. Thus also he applied himself to God by prayer, for direction what to say and do upon this sad occasion. He would not speak to them till he had thus humbled and composed his own spirit, (which could not but begin to be heated) and had received instruction from God. The heart of the wise in such a case studies to answer, and asks counsel at God's mouth. 2. He agrees to refer the case to God, and leave it to him to decide it, as one well assured of the goodness of his title, and yet well content to resign, if God saw fit to gratify this discontented people with another nomination. An honest cause fears not a trial, fears not a second trial, fears not a speedy trial; even to-morrow let it be brought on, *ver. 5, 6, 7.* Let Korah and his partizans bring their censers, and offer incense before the Lord, and if he testify his acceptance of them, well and good; Moses is now as willing all the Lord's people should be priests, if God so please, as before that they should all be prophets, *chap. ix. 29.* But if God, upon an appeal to him, determine (as no doubt he would) for Aaron, they would find it highly dangerous to make the experiment: and therefore he puts it off till to-morrow, to try whether when they had slept upon it they would desist, and let fall their pretensions. 5. He argues the case fairly with them, to still the mutiny with fair reasoning, if possible, before the appeal came to God's tribunal, for then he knew it would end in the confusion of the complainants.

1. He calls them *the sons of Levi*, *ver. 7.* and again, *ver. 8.* They were of his own tribe, nay, they were God's tribe; it was therefore the worse in them thus to mutiny, both against God, and against him. It was not long since the sons of Levi had bravely appeared on God's side in the matter of the golden calf, and got immortal honour by it; and shall they that were then the only innocents, now be the leading criminals, and lose all the honour they had won? Could there be such chaff in God's floor? Levites, and yet rebels! 3. He retorts their charge upon themselves; they had unjustly charged Moses and Aaron with taking too much upon them, though they had no more but what God put upon them; nay, saith Moses, *Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.* Note, They that take upon them to controul and contradict God's appointment, take too much upon them. It is enough for us to submit, it is too much to prescribe. 3. He

He shews them the privilege they had as Levites, which was sufficient for them, they needed not to aspire to the honour of the priesthood, *ver. 9, 10.* He minds them, (1.) How great the honour was to which they were preferred, as Levites. 1. They were separated from the congregation of Israel, distinguished from them, dignified above them; instead of complaining that Aaron's family was advanced above theirs, they ought to be thankful that their tribe was advanced above the rest of the tribes, though they had been in all respects upon the level with them. Note, It will help to keep us from envying those that are above us, duly to consider how many there are above whom we are placed. Instead of fretting that any are preferred before us in honour, powers, estate, or interest in gifts, graces, or usefulness, we have reason to bless God, if we, who are less than the least, are not put hindmost. Many perhaps who deserve better, are not preferred so well. 2. They were separated to very great and valuable honours, (1.) To draw near to God, nearer than common Israelites, though they also were a people unto him; the nearer any are to God, the greater is their honour. (2.) To do the service of the tabernacle. It is honour enough to bear the vessels of the sanctuary, and to be employed in any part of the service of the tabernacle. God's service is not only perfect freedom, but high preferment. (3.) To stand before the congregation to minister unto them. Note, Those are truly great that serve the public, and it is the honour of God's ministers to be the church ministers; nay, which adds to the dignity put upon them. 3. It was the God of Israel himself that separated them. It was his act and deed to put them in their place, and therefore they ought not to be discontented with that; and he it was likewise that put Aaron into his place, and therefore they ought not to envy that. 4. He convicts them of the sin of undervaluing these privileges, *Seemeth it a small thing unto you? q. d.* It will become you of all men to grudge Aaron the priesthood, when at the same time that he was advanced to that honour, you were designed for another honour dependent upon it, and shine with rays borrowed from him. Note, 1. The privilege of drawing near to the God of Israel is not a small thing in itself, and therefore must not seem small to us. To those who neglect opportunities of drawing near to God, who are careless and formal in it, to whom it is a task and not a pleasure, we may properly put this question; *Seemeth it a small thing to you, that God has made you a people near unto him?* 2. Those who aspire after, and usurp the honours forbidden them, put a great contempt upon the honours allowed them. We have each of us as good a share of reputation as God sees fit for us, and sees us fit for, and much better than we deserve; and we ought to rest satisfied with it, and not as these here, *exercise ourselves in things too high for us? Seek ye the priesthood also?* They would not own that they sought it, but Moses saw that in their eye; the law had provided very well for those that serve at the altar, and therefore they would put in for the office. 5. He interprets their mutiny to be a rebellion against God, *ver. 11.* while they pretended to assert the holiness and liberty of the Israel of God, they really took up arms against the God of Israel, *Ye are gathered together against the Lord.* Note, Those that strive against God's ordinances and providences, whatever they pretend, and whether they are aware of it or no, do indeed strive with their Maker. Those resist the prince, who resist those that are commissioned by him: for alas, says Moses, *What is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?* If murmurers and complainers would consider, that the instruments they quarrel with, are but instruments whom God employs, and that they are but what he makes them, and neither more nor less, better nor worse, they would not be so bold and free in their censures and reproaches as they are. They that found the priesthood as it was settled a blessing, must give all the praise to God; but if any thought it a burden, they must not therefore quarrel with Aaron, who is but what he is made, and doth as he is bidden. Thus he interested God in the cause, and so might be sure of speeding well in his appeal.

12. ¶ And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab; which said, We will not come up. 13. *Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?* 14. Moreover, thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards; wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up. 15. And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the LORD, Respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them. 16. And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the LORD, thou, and they and Aaron to-morrow: 17. And take every man his censer, and put incense in them, and bring ye before the LORD every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers: thou also and Aaron, each of you his censer, 18. And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron. 19. And Korah gathered all the congregation against them, under the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation. 20. And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 21. Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment. 22. And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?

Here is, 1. The insolence of Dathan and Abiram, and their treasonable remonstrance. Moses had heard what Korah had to say, and had answered it; now he summons Dathan and Abiram to bring in their complaints, *ver. 12.* but they would not obey his summons; either because they could not for shame say that to his face, which they were resolved to say, and then it is as an instance of some remains of modesty in them; or rather, because they would not so far own his authority, and then it is an instance of the highest degree of impudence. They spoke the language of Pharaoh himself, who set Moses at defiance, but they forgot how dear he paid for it. Had not their heads been wretchedly heated, and their hearts hardened, they

might have considered, that if they regarded not these messengers, Moses could soon in God's name send messengers of death for them. But thus the God of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not. But by the same messengers they send their articles of impeachment against Moses. And the charge runs very high. 1. They charge him with having done them a great deal of wrong in bringing them out of Egypt, invidiously calling that a land flowing with milk and honey, *ver. 13.* Onions, and garlick, and fish, they had indeed plenty of in Egypt, but it never pretended to milk and honey; only they would thus banter the promise of Canaan. Ungrateful wretches, to represent that as an injury to them, which was really the greatest favour that ever was bestowed upon any people! 2. They charge him with a design upon their lives, that he intended to kill them in this wilderness, though they were so well provided for. And if they were sentenced to die in the wilderness, they must thank themselves. Moses would have healed them, and they would not be healed. 3. They charge him with a design upon their liberties, that he meant to enslave them, by making himself prince over them. A prince over them! Was he not a tender father to them; nay, their humble servant for the Lord's sake? Had they not their properties secured, their order preserved, justice impartially administered? Did they not live in ease and honour? and yet they complain as if Moses's yoke were heavier than Pharaoh's. And did Moses make himself a prince? far from it. How gladly would he have declined the office at first? How gladly would he have resigned it many a time since? And yet is thus put under the blackest characters of a tyrant, and an usurper. 4. They charge him with cheating them, raising their expectations of a good land, and then defeating them, *ver. 14.* *Thou hast not brought us, as thou promisedst us, into a land that floweth with milk and honey;* and pray whose fault was that? He had brought them to the borders of it, and was just ready, under God, to put them in possession of it; but they thrust it away from them, and shut the door against themselves; so that it was purely their own fault that they were not now in Canaan, and yet Moses must bear the blame. Thus when the foolishness of man perverteth his way, his heart fretteth against the Lord, *Prov. xix. 3.* 5. They charge him in the general with unfair dealing, that put out the eyes of these men, and then meant to lead them blindfold as he pleased. The design of all he did for them was to open their eyes, and yet they insinuate, that he intended to put out their eyes, that they might not see themselves imposed upon. Note, The wisest and best cannot please every body, nor gain the good word of all. Those often fall under the highest censures who have merited the highest applause. Many a good work Moses had shewed them from the Father, and for which of these do they reproach him? 2. Moses's just resentment of their insolence, *ver. 15.* Moses, though the meekest man, yet finding God reproached in him, was very wroth; he could not bear to see a people ruining themselves, for whose salvation he had done so much. In this discomposure, (1.) He appeals to God concerning his own integrity: whereas they basely reflected upon him as ambitious, covetous, and oppressive, in making himself a prince over them. God was his witness, (1.) That he never got any thing by them; *I have not taken one ass from them,* not only not by way of bribery and extortion, but not by way of recompence or gratuity for all the good offices he had done them, he never took the pay of a general or salary of a judge, much less the tribute of a prince. He got more in his estate when he kept Jethro's flock, than since he came to be king in Jethurun. (2.) That they never lost any thing by him, *neither have I hurt any one of them,* no not the least, no not the worst, no not those that had been most peevish and provoking to him: he never abused his power to the support of wrong. Note, Those that have never blemished themselves, need not fear being blemished: when men condemn us we may be easy, if our own hearts condemn us not. (2.) He begs of God to plead his cause, and clear him, by shewing his displeasure at the incense which Korah and his company were to offer, with whom Dathan and Abiram were in confederacy. Lord, saith he, *Respect not thou their offering.* Wherein he seems to refer to the history of Cain, lately written by his own hand, of whom it is said, that to him and his offering God had not respect, *Gen. iv. 4.* These that followed the gainful-ling of Korah, walked in the way of Cain, (they are put together, *Jude 11.*) and therefore he prays they might be frowned upon as Cain was, and put to the same confusion. 3. Issue joined between Moses and his accusers. 1. Moses challenges them to appear with Aaron next morning, at the time of offering up the morning incense, and refer themselves to God's judgment, *ver. 16, 17.* Since he could not convince them by his calm and affectionate reasoning, he is ready to enter into bonds to stand God's award, not doubting but that God would appear to decide the controversy. This reference he had agreed to before, *ver. 6, 7.* and here adds only one clause, which speaks his great condescension to the plaintiffs, that Aaron, against whose advancement they excepted, though now advanced by the divine institution to the honour of burning incense within the tabernacle, yet upon this trial, he should put himself into the place of a probationer, and stand upon the level with Korah, at the door of the tabernacle; nay, and Moses would himself stand with them, so that the complainant shall have all the fair dealing he can desire; and thus every mouth shall be stopped. 2. Korah accepts the challenge, and makes his appearance with Moses and Aaron at the door of the tabernacle, to make good his pretensions, *ver. 18, 19.* If he had not had a very great stock of impudence, he could not have carried on the matter thus far. Had not he lately seen Nadab and Abihu, the consecrated priests, struck dead, for daring to offer incense with unhallowed fire, and could he and his accomplices expect to fare any better in offering incense with unhallowed hands? Yet to confront Moses and Aaron, in the height of his pride he thus bids defiance to heaven, pretends to demand the divine acceptance without a divine warrant, thus wretchedly is the heart hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. They took every man his censer. Perhaps these were some of the censers which these heads of families had made use of at their family altars, before this part of religious service was confined to the priesthood, and the altar in the tabernacle; and they would bring them into use and reputation again, or they might be common chafing dishes, which were for their ordinary use. Now to attend the solemn trial, and to be witness of the issue, one would have thought Moses should have gathered the congregation against the rebels, but it seems Korah gathered them against Moses, *ver. 19.* which intimates that a great part of the congregation sided with Korah, were at his beck, and wished him success: And that Korah's hopes were very high of carrying the point against Aaron; for had he suspected the goodness of his cause, he would not have coveted to make the trial thus public; but little did he think that he was now calling the congregation together to be the witnesses of his own confusion: Note, Proud and ambitious men, while they are projecting their own advancement, oft prove to have been preparing for their own more shameful fall. 4. The judgment set, and the judge taking the tribunal, and threatening to give sentence against the whole congregation. (1.) The glory of the Lord appeared, *ver. 19.* The same glory that appeared to install Aaron in his office at first, *Lev. ix. 23.* now appeared to confirm him in it, and to confound those that oppose him, and set up themselves in competition with him. The Shechinah, or divine Majesty, the glory of the eternal Word, which ordinarily dwelt between the cherubims, within the vail, now was publicly

publicly seen over the door of the tabernacle, to the terror of the whole congregation, for though they saw no manner of similitude, yet, probably, the appearances of the light and fire were such as plainly shewed God to be angry with them; as when he appeared, *Numb. xiv. 10.* Nothing is more terrible to those who are conscious of guilt, than the appearances of divine glory; for such a glorious Being must needs be a formidable enemy. (2.) God threatened to *consume them all in a moment*, and in order to that bid Moses and Aaron stand from among them, *ver. 21.* God thus shewed what their sin deserved, and how very provoking it was to him. See what a dangerous thing it is to have fellowship with sinners, and in the least to partake with them. Many of the congregation, it is likely, came only for company, following the crowd, or for curiosity to see the issue, yet not coming, as they ought to have done, to bear their testimony against the rebels, and openly to declare for God and Moses, they had like to have been all consumed in a moment. If we follow the herd into which the devil is entered, it is at our peril. 5. The humble intercession of Moses and Aaron for the congregation, *ver. 22.* (1.) Their posture was importuning; they fell on their faces, prostrating themselves before God, as supplicants in good earnest, that they might prevail for sparing mercy. Though the people had treacherously deserted them, and struck in with those that were in arms against them, yet they approved themselves faithful to the trusts reposed in them, as shepherds of Israel, which were to stand in the breach when they saw the flock in danger. Note, If others fail in their duty to us, that doth not discharge us from our duty to them; nor take off the obligations we lie under to seek their welfare. (2.) Their prayer was a pleading prayer, and it proved a prevailing one: Now, God had *destroyed them*, if Moses had not turned away his wrath, *Psal. cv. 23.* yet far be it from us to imagine, that Moses was more considerate or more compassionate than God, in such a case as this; but God saw fit to shew his just displeasure against the sin of sinners by the sentence, and at the same time to shew his gracious condescension to the prayers of saints, by the revocation of the sentence at the intercession of Moses. Observe in the prayer, 1. The title they give to God. *The God of the spirits of all flesh.* See what man is; He is a spirit in flesh, a soul embodied; a creature wonderfully compounded of heaven and earth. See what God is; He is the God of the spirits of all mankind. He forms the spirit, *Zech. xii. 1.* He fathers it, *Heb. xii. 9.* He has an ability to fashion it, *Psal. cxxxiii. 15.* and authority to dispose of it, for he hath laid, *All souls are mine*, *Ezek. xviii. 4.* They insinuate hereby, that though as *the God of the spirits of all flesh*, he might in sovereignty consume this congregation in a moment, yet it was to be hoped, he would in mercy spare them, not only because they were the work of his own hands, and he had a propriety in them, but because being the *God of spirits* he knew their frame, and could distinguish between the leaders and the led; between those that sinned maliciously, and those who were drawn in by their wives, and would make a difference accordingly in his judgments. 2. The argument they insist on, it is much the same with that which Abraham urged in his intercession for Sodom, *Gen. xviii. 23.* *Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked?* Such is the plea here, *Shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?* Not but that it was the sin of them all to join in this matter, but the great transgression was his that first hatched the treason. Note, Whatever God may do in sovereignty and strict justice, we have reason to hope, that he will not destroy a congregation for the sin of one, but that *righteousness and peace* having *kissed each other* in the undertaking of the Redeemer, *mercy shall rejoice against judgment.* Moses knew that all the congregation must *perish in the wilderness* by degrees, yet he is thus earnest in prayer, that they might not be consumed at once, and would reckon it a favour to obtain a reprieve. *Lord, let it alone this year.*

23. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 24. Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. 25. And Moses rose up, and went unto Dathan, and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him. 26. And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. 27. So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side; and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children. 28. And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. 29. If these men die the common death of all men; or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me. 30. But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD. 31. ¶ And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them; 32. And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. 33. They and all that appertained to them went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them; and they perished from among the congregation. 34. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them; for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also.

We have here the determining of the controversy with Dathan and Abiram, that rebelled against Moses; as in the next paragraph the like deciding or controversy with Korah and his company, that would be rivals with Aaron. It should seem that Dathan and Abiram had set up a spacious tabernacle in the midst of the tents of their families, where they kept court, met to consult, and hung out their flag of defiance against Moses; it is here called the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, *ver. 24—27.* There, as in the place of rendezvous, Dathan and Abiram staid, when Korah and his friends went up to the tabernacle of the Lord, waiting the issue of their trial; but here we are told how they had their business done, before that

No. XXIII.

trial was over. For God will take what method he pleases in his judgments. 1. Public warning is given to the congregation to withdraw immediately from the tents of the rebels. (1.) God bids Moses speak to this purpose, *ver. 24.* This was in answer to Moses's prayer; he had begged that God would not *destroy the whole congregation*; well, faith God, I will not, provided they be so wise as to shift for their own safety, and get out of the way of danger. If they will quit the rebels, well and good, they shall not perish with them, otherwise let them take what follows. Note, We cannot expect to reap benefit by the prayers of our friends for our salvation, unless we ourselves be diligent and faithful in making use of the means of salvation. For God never promised to save by miracles those that would not save themselves by means. Moses that had prayed for them must preach this to them, and warn them to *steer from this wrath to come.* (2.) Moses accordingly repairs to the head-quarters of the rebels, leaving Aaron at the door of the tabernacle, *ver. 25.* Dathan and Abiram had contumaciously refused to come up to him, *ver. 12.* yet he humbly condescends to go down to them, to try if he could yet convince and reclaim them. Ministers must thus *with meekness instruct those that oppose themselves*; and not think it below them to stoop to those that are most stubborn, for their good. Christ himself *stretches out his hand to a rebellious and gainsaying people.* The several elders of Israel attend Moses as his guard, to secure him from the insolence of the rabble; and by their presence to put an honour upon him, and if possible, to strike an awe upon the rebels. It is our duty to contribute all we can to the countenance and support of injured innocency and honour. (3.) Proclamation is made, that all manner of persons, as they tendered their own safety, should forthwith depart from the tents of those wicked men, *ver. 26.* and thus should signify, that they deserted their cause and interest, detested their crime and counsels, and dreaded the punishment coming upon them. Note, Those that would not perish with sinners, must come out from among them, and be separate. In vain do we pray, *Gather not our souls with sinners*, if we save not ourselves from the *untoward generation.* God's people are called out of Babylon, lest they share both in warning, but the rebels themselves continue obdurate, *ver. 27.* 1. God in mercy inclined the people to forsake the rebels. *They gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.* But those whose lot it was to pitch near them, who doubtless with themselves removed their families, and all their effects; and those also who were come from all parts of their camp to see the issue. It was in answer to the prayer of Moses, that God thus stirred up the hearts of the congregation to shift for their own preservation. Note, To those whom God will save he gives repentance, that they may recover themselves out of the snares of the devil. Grace to separate from evil doers, is one of the best things that accompany salvation. 2. God in justice left the rebels to the obstinacy and hardness of their own hearts. Though they saw themselves abandoned by all their neighbours, and set up as a mark to the arrows of God's justice: yet instead of falling down and humbling themselves before God and Moses, owning their crime, and begging pardon, instead of fleeing, and dispersing themselves to seek for shelter in the crowd, they impudently stood in the doors of their tents, as if they would out-face God himself, and dare him to do his worst. Thus were their hearts hardened to their own destruction, and they were fearless when their case was most fearful. But what pity was it that their little children, who were not capable of guilt or fear, should by the presumption of their parents be put in this audacious posture! Happy they who are taught betimes to bow before God, and not as those unhappy little ones to stand it out against him! 3. Sentence is solemnly pronounced upon them by Moses in the name of the Lord, and the decision of the controversy is put upon the execution of that sentence by the almighty power of God. Moses, by divine instinct and direction, when the eyes of all Israel were fastened upon him, waiting the event, moved with a just and holy indignation at the impudence of the rebels, boldly puts the whole matter to a surprising issue, *ver. 28, 29, 30.* (1.) If the rebels die a common death, he will be content to be called and counted an impostor; not only if they die a natural death, but if they die by any sort of judgment that has formerly been executed on other malefactors, if they die by the plague, or by fire from heaven, or by the sword, then say, God has disowned me; but, (2.) if the earth open and swallow them up, (a punishment without precedent) then let all the house of Israel know assuredly that I am God's servant, sent by him, and employed for him, and those that fight against me, fight against him. The judgment itself would have been proof enough of God's displeasure against the rebels, and would have given all men to understand that they had provoked the Lord; but when it was thus solemnly foretold, and appealed to by Moses beforehand, when there was not the least previous indication of it from without, the convincing evidence of it was much the stronger, and it was put beyond dispute, that he was not only a servant but a favourite of heaven, who was so intimately acquainted with the divine counsels, and could obtain such extraordinary appearances of the divine power in its vindication. 4. Execution is immediately done. It appeared that God and his servant Moses understood one another very well, for as soon as ever Moses had spoken the word, God did the work, the earth *clave asunder*, *ver. 31.* opened her mouth and swallowed them all up, them and theirs, *ver. 32.* and then closed upon them, *ver. 33.* This judgment was, (1.) unparalleled. God in it created a new thing, did what he never did before, for he has many arrows in his quiver; and there are diversities of operations in wrath as well as mercy. Dathan and Abiram thought themselves safe because they were at a distance from the *Shechinah*, whence the fire of the Lord had sometimes issued, *qui procul à fore (they say) procul à fulmine;* but God made them know that he was not tied up to one way of punishing; the earth, when he pleaseth, shall serve his justice as effectually as the fire. (2.) It was very terrible to the sinners themselves, to go down alive into their own graves; dead and buried in an instant; to go down thus to the bars of the pit, when they were in their full strength, wholly at ease and quiet. (3.) It was severe upon their poor children, who for the greater terror of the judgment, and fuller indication of the divine wrath, perished as parts of their parents; in which though we cannot particularly tell either how bad they might be to deserve it, or how good God might be otherwise to them to compensate it, yet this we are sure in the general, that infinite justice did them no wrong. *Far be it from God, that he should do iniquity.* (4.) It was altogether miraculous. The cleaving of the earth was as wonderful, and as much above the power of nature, as the cleaving of the sea; and the closing of the earth again, more so than the closing of the waters. God has all the creatures at his command, and can make any of them, when he pleaseth, instruments of his justice; nor will any of them be our friends, if he be our enemy. God now confirmed to Israel, what Moses had lately taught them in that prayer of his, *Psal. xc. 11.* *Who knows the power of thine anger?* He hath when he pleaseth strange punishments for the workers of iniquity, *Job xxxi. 3.* Let us therefore conclude, *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?* (5.) It was very significant. They set their mouths against the heavens, and their throat was an open sepulchre, justly therefore doth the earth open her mouth upon them, and swallow them up. They made a rent in the congregation, justly therefore is the earth rent under

under them. Presumptuous sinners, that hate to be reformed, are a burden to the earth, the whole creation groans under them, which here was signified by this, that the earth sunk under these rebels, as weary of bearing them, and being under them. And considering how the earth is still in like manner loaded with the weight of iniquity, we have reason to wonder, that this was the only time it ever sunk under its load. Lastly, It was typical of the eternal ruin of sinners that die impenitent, who, perhaps in allusion to this, are said to *sink down into the pit*, Psal. ix. 15. and to *go down quick into hell*, Psal. lv. 15. But David even when he *sinks in the deep mire*, yet prays in faith, *Let not the pit shut her mouth upon me*, as it doth on the damned, between whom and life there is a gulf fixed, Psal. lxxix. 2—15. His case was bad, but not like this, desperate. 5. All Israel is alarmed at the judgment, ver. 34. *They fled at the cry of them*. They cried for help when it was too late; their doleful shrieks, instead of fetching their neighbours in to their relief, drove them so much the farther off; for knowing their own guilt, and one another's, they hastened one another, saying, *Left the earth swallow us up also*. Note, Other's ruins should be our warnings. Could we by faith hear the outcries of those that are gone down to the bottomless pit, we would give more diligence than we do to escape for our lives, lest we also come into that condemnation.

35. And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense. 36. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 37. Speak unto Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning, and scatter thou the fire yonder; for they are hallowed. 38. The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates for a covering of the altar: for they offered them before the LORD, therefore they are hallowed: and they shall be a sign unto the children of Israel. 39. And Eleazar the priest took the brazen censers, wherewith they that were burnt had offered; and they were made broad plates for a covering of the altar: 40. To be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the LORD: that he be not as Korah, and as his company: as the LORD said to him by the hand of Moses.

We must now look back to the door of the tabernacle, where we left the pretenders to the priesthood with their censers in their hands ready to offer incense; and here we find, 1. Vengeance taken on them, ver. 35. It is probable, at the same time that the earth opened in the camp to swallow up Dathan and Abiram, a fire went out from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense, and Aaron that stood with them was preserved alive. This punishment was not indeed so new a thing as the former, for Nadab and Abihu thus died; but it was no less strange or dreadful, and in it it appeared, (1.) That our God is a consuming fire. Is thunder a sensible indication of the terror of his voice? Lightning is so of the power of his hand. We must see in this his fiery indignation which devours the adversaries, and infer from it what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, Heb. x. 27—31. (1.) That it is at our peril, if we meddle with that which doth not belong to us. God is jealous of the honour of his own institutions, and will not have them invaded. It is most probable, Korah himself was consumed with those two hundred and fifty that pretended to offer incense, for the priesthood was the thing that he aimed at, and therefore we have reason to think he would not quit his post at the door of the tabernacle. But behold, they are made sacrifices to the justice of God, who flattered themselves with the hopes of being priests. Had they been content with their office as Levites, which was sacred and honourable, and better than they deserved, they might have lived and died with joy and reputation: but, like the angels that sinned, leaving their first estate, and aiming at the honours that were not appointed them; they were thrust down to Hades, their censers struck out of their hands, and their breath out of their bodies, by a burning, which typified the vengeance of eternal fire. 2. Care is taken to preserve and perpetuate the remembrance of this vengeance. No mention is made of the taking up of their carcases, the scripture leaves them as dung upon the face of the earth; but orders are given about their censers. 1. That they be secured, because they are hallowed; Eleazar is charged with this, ver. 37. Those invaders of the priesthood had proceeded so far, by the divine patience and permission, as to kindle their incense with fire from off the altar, which they were suffered to use for experiment-sake: but as soon as they had kindled their fire, God kindled another which put a fatal final period to their pretensions: now Eleazar is ordered to scatter the fire, with the incense that was kindled with it, in some unclean place without the camp, to signify God's abhorrence of their offering, as a polluted thing; *The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord*: But he is to gather up the censers out of the mingled burning, God's fire, and theirs; because they are hallowed. Having been once put to a holy use, and that by God's own order, (though only for trial) they must not return to common service; so some understand it: rather, they are devoted; they are an anathema; and therefore, are all devoted things, they must be made some way or other serviceable to the glory of God. 2. That they be used in the service of the sanctuary, not in censers, that would rather have put honour upon the usurpers, whose disgrace was intended; nor was there occasion for brazen censers, the golden altar was served with golden ones; but they must be beaten into broad plates for a covering of the brazen altar, ver. 38, 39, 40. These pretenders thought to have ruined the altar, by laying the priesthood in common again; but to shew that Aaron's office was so far from being shaken by their impotent malice, that it was rather confirmed by it, their censers which offered to rival his, were used both for the adorning, and for the preserving of the altar at which he ministered. Yet this was not all; this covering of the altar must be a memorial to the children of Israel, throughout their generations, of this great event. Though there was so much in it astonishing, and though Moses was to record it in his history, yet there was danger of its being forgotten in process of time; impressions that seem deep are not always durable; therefore it was necessary to appoint this record of the judgment; that the Levites who attended this altar, and had their inferior services appointed them, might learn to keep within their bounds, and be afraid of transgressing them, lest they should be made like Korah and his company, who were Levites, and would have been priests. These censers were preserved in terror, that others might hear and fear, and do no more presumptuously. Thus has God provided that his wonderful works both in mercy and judgment, should be had in everlasting remembrance, that the end of them may be answered, and they may

serve for instruction and admonition, to those on whom the ends of the world are come.

41. ¶ But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses, and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD, 42. And it came to pass when the congregation was gathered against Moses, and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation; and behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared. 43. And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation. 44. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 45. Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment; and they fell upon their faces. 46. ¶ And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them; for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun. 47. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. 48. And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed. 49. Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah. 50. And Aaron returned unto Moses, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the plague was stayed.

Here is, 1. A new rebellion raised the very next day against Moses and Aaron. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and wonder, O earth! Was there ever such an instance of the incurable corruption of sinners? ver. 41. On the morrow the body of the people mutinied; (1.) Though they were but newly terrified by the sight of the punishment of the rebels; the shrieks of those sinking sinners, those sinners against their souls were yet sounding in their ears, the smell of the fire yet remained, and the gaping earth was scarce thoroughly closed, and yet the same sins are re-acted, and all these warnings slighted. (2.) Though they were but newly saved from sharing in the same punishment, and the survivors were as brands plucked out of the burning, yet they fly in the face of Moses and Aaron, to whose intercession they owed their preservation. Their charge runs very high, *ye have killed the people of the Lord*. Could any thing have been said more unjustly and maliciously? They canonize the rebels, calling them the people of the Lord, who died in arms against him; they stigmatized divine justice itself; it was plain enough Moses and Aaron had no hand in their death, they did what they could to save them; so that in charging them with murder, they did in effect charge God himself with it. The continued obstinacy of this people, notwithstanding the terrors of God's law, as it was given on mount Sinai, and the terrors of his judgments, as they were here executed on the disobedient, shews how necessary the grace of God is to the effectual change of mens hearts and lives, without which the most likely means will never attain the end. Love will do what fear cannot. 2. God's speedy appearing against the rebels. When they were gathered against Moses and Aaron, perhaps with a design to depose or murder them, they looked towards the tabernacle, as if their misgiving consciences expected some frown from thence, and behold the glory of the Lord appeared, ver. 42. for the protection of his servants, and confusion of his and their accusers and adversaries, Moses and Aaron thereupon came before the tabernacle, partly for their own safety; there they took sanctuary from the strife of tongues, Psal. xxvii. 5. xxxi. 20. and partly for advice, to know what was the mind of God upon this occasion, ver. 43. justice hereupon declares, they deserve to be consumed in a moment, ver. 45. Why should they live another day, who hate to be reformed, and whose rebellions are their daily practices? Let just vengeance take place, and do its work, and the trouble with them will soon be over; only Moses and Aaron must first be secured. 3. The intercession which Moses and Aaron made for them. Though they had as much reason one would think, as Elias had to make intercession against Israel, Rom. xi. 7. yet they forgive and forget the indignities offered them, and are the best friends their enemies have. (1.) They both fell on their faces, humbly to intercede with God for mercy, knowing how great their provocation was. This they had done several times before, upon the like occasion; and though the people had basely requited them for it, yet God having graciously accepted them, they still have recourse to the same method. This is praying always. (2.) Moses perceiving that the plague was begun in the congregation of the rebels, i. e. that the body of them which was gathered together against Moses, sends Aaron by an act of his priestly office to make atonement for them, ver. 46. And Aaron readily went, burnt incense between the living and the dead, not to purify the affected air, but to pacify an offended God, and so stayed the progress of the judgment, ver. 47.

By this it appeared, 1. That Aaron was a very good man, and a man that had a true love for the children of his people, though they hated and envied him. Though God was now avenging his quarrel, and pleading the cause of his priesthood, yet he interposeth to turn away God's wrath. Nay, forgetting his age and gravity, he ran into the midst of the congregation to help them. He did not say, Let them smart a while, and then when I come I shall be the more welcome, but as one tender of the life of every Israelite, he makes all possible speed into the gap at which death was entering. Moses and Aaron had been charged with killing the people of the Lord, with which they might justly have upbraided them now; could they expect those to be their saviours, whom they had so invidiously called their murderers? But those good men have taught us here by their example, not to be fullen towards those that are peevish with us, nor to take the advantage which men give us by their provoking language, to deny them any real kindness, which it is in the power of our hands to do them. We must render good for evil. 2. That Aaron was a very bold man; bold to venture into the midst of an enraged rabble, that were gathered together against him, and who, for ought he knew, might be the more exasperated by the plague that was begun: bold, to venture into the midst of the infection, where the arrows of death flew thickest, and hundreds, nay thousands, were falling on his right and left hand. To save their lives, he put his own into his hand, not counting it dear to him, so he might but fulfil his ministry. 3. That Aaron was a man of God, and ordained for men, in things pertaining to God. His call to the

the priesthood was hereby abundantly confirmed, and set above all contradiction; God had not only saved his life, when the intruders were cut off, but now made him an instrument of saving Israel. Compare the center of Aaron here, with the *censers of those sinners against their own souls*. Those provoked God's anger, this pacified it; those destroyed men's lives, this saved them; no room therefore is left to doubt of Aaron's call to the priesthood. Note, Those make out the best title to public honours, that lay out themselves the most for the public good, and obtain mercy of the Lord to be faithful and useful. If any man will be great, let him make himself the servant of all. 4. That Aaron was a *type of Christ*, who came into the world to make atonement for sin, and to turn away the wrath of God from us, and who, by his mediation and intercession, stands between the living and the dead, to secure his chosen Israel to himself, and save them out of the midst of a world infected with sin and the curse. 4. The result and issue of the whole matter. 1. God's justice was glorified in the death of some. Great execution the sword of the Lord did in a very little time. Though Aaron made all the haste he could, yet before he could reach his post of service, there were fourteen thousand seven hundred men laid dead upon the spot, ver. 49. There were but a few comparatively that died about the matter of Korah, the ring-leaders only were made examples, but the people not being led to repentance, by the patience and forbearance of God with them, justice is not now so sparing of the blood of Israelites. They cried out of the death of a few hundreds as an unmerciful slaughter made among the *people of the Lord*, but here God silenceth that complaint by the slaughter of many thousands. Note, Those that quarrel with lesser judgments, prepare greater for themselves; for when God judgeth he will overcome. 2. His mercy was glorified in the preservation of the rest; God shewed them what he would do by his power, and what he might do in justice, but then shewed them what he would do in his love and pity, he would preserve them a people to himself for all this, in and by a mediator. The cloud of Aaron's incense coming from his hand stayed the plague. Note, It is much for the glory of God's goodness, that many a time even in wrath he remembers mercy; and even when judgments have been begun, prayer has put a stop to them: so ready is he to forgive, and so little pleasure doth he take in the death of sinners.

C H A P. XVII.

Enough had been done in the chapter before to quash all the pretensions of the families of the tribe of Levi, that would set up in competition with Aaron, and to make it appear that Aaron was the head of that tribe; but it seems, when that matter was settled, the princes of the rest of the tribes began to murmur; if the head of a tribe must be a priest, why not the head of some other tribe than that of Levi; he that searched the heart knew this thought to be in the breast of some of them, and before it broke out into any overt-act graciously anticipated it, to prevent bloodshed; and it is done by miracle in this chapter, not a miracle of wrath, as before, but of grace. 1. The matter is put upon trial by the bringing of twelve rods, one for each prince before the Lord, ver. 1—7. 2. Upon trial the matter is determined by the miraculous blossoming of Aaron's rod, ver. 8, 9. 3. The decision of the controversy is registered by the preservation of the rod, ver. 10, 11. 4. The people acquiesce in it with some reluctance, ver. 12, 13.

1. **A**ND the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod, according to the house of their fathers, of all their princes, according to the house of their fathers, twelve rods; write thou every man's name upon his rod. 3. And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod shall be for the head of the house of their fathers. 4. And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you. 5. And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod whom I shall choose, shall blossom; and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you. 6. ¶ And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, and every one of their princes gave him a rod apiece, for each prince one, according to their fathers' houses, even twelve rods; and the rod of Aaron was among their rods. 7. And Moses laid up the rods before the LORD, in the tabernacle of witness.

Here is, 1. Orders given for the bringing in of a rod for every tribe: (which was significant enough, for the word here used for a rod sometimes signifies a tribe, as particularly *Numb. xxxiv. 13.*) that God, by a miracle wrought on purpose, might make it known on whom he had conferred the honour of the priesthood. (1.) It seems then the priesthood was a preferment worth seeking and striving for, even by the princes of the tribes. It is an honour to the greatest of men to be employed in the service of God. Yet perhaps these contended for it, rather for the sake of the profit and power that attended the office, than for the sake of that in it which was divine and sacred. (2.) It seems likewise, after all that had been done to settle this matter, there were those who would be ready upon any occasion to contest it. They would not acquiesce in the divine appointment, but would make an interest in opposition to it. They strive with God for the dominion, and the question is, whose will shall stand; God will rule, but Israel will not be ruled, and that is the quarrel. (3.) It is an instance of the grace of God, that having wrought divers miracles to punish sin, he would work one more on purpose to prevent it. God has effectually provided, that the obstinate shall be left inexcusable, and every mouth shall be stopped. Israel was very prone to murmur both against God, and against their governors; now, saith God, *I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel*, ver. 5. If any thing will convince them, they shall be convinced; and if this will not convince them, nothing will. This was to be to them, as Christ saith, the sign of the prophet Jonas; that is, his own resurrection should be, to the men of that generation, the highest proof of his mission that should be given them.

The directions are; (1.) That twelve rods or staves should be brought in; it is probable, they were not now fresh cut out of a tree, for then the miracle had not been so great: But that they were the staves which

the princes ordinarily used as ensigns of their authority; of which we read, *chap. xxi. 18.* old dry staves, that had no sap in them, and it is very possible they might all be made of the almond-tree. It should seem they were but twelve in all with Aaron's, for when Levi comes into the count, Ephraim and Manasseh make but one, under the name of Joseph. (2.) That the name of each prince should be written upon his rod, that every man might know his own, and to prevent contests. Writing is often a good preservative against strife, for what is written may be appealed to. (3.) That they should be laid up in the tabernacle, for one night, *before the testimony*, i. e. before the ark, which with its mercy-seat, was a symbol, token, or testimony of God's presence with them. (4.) They were to expect, being told it before, that the tribe, or prince whom God chose to the priesthood, his rod should bud and blossom, ver. 5. It was requisite they should be told of it, that it might appear not to be casual but according to the counsel and will of God. 2. The preparing of the rods accordingly. The princes brought them in, some of them perhaps fondly expecting that the choice would fall upon them, and all of them thinking it honour enough to be competitors with Aaron, and to stand candidates, even for the priesthood, ver. 7. and *Moses laid them up before the Lord*. He did not object, that the matter was sufficiently settled already, and enough done to convince those that were not invincibly hardened in their prejudices. He did not undertake to determine the controversy himself, though it might easily have been done, nor did he suggest that it would be to no purpose to offer satisfaction to a people that were willingly blind, but since God will have it so, he did his part, and lodged the case before the Lord, to whom the appeal was made by consent, and left it with him.

8. And it came to pass that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness: and behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds. 9. And Moses brought out all the rods from before the LORD, unto all the children of Israel; and they looked, and took every man his rod. 10. ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, bring Aaron's rod again, before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not. 11. And Moses did so: as the LORD commanded him, so did he. 12. And the children of Israel spake unto Moses, saying, Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish. 13. Whosoever cometh any thing near unto the tabernacle of the LORD, shall die: shall we be consumed with dying?

Here is, 1. The final determination of the controversy concerning the priesthood, by a miracle, ver. 8, 9. The rods, or staves, were brought out from the most holy place where they were laid up, and publicly produced before the people; and while all the rest of the rods remained as they were, Aaron's rod only of a dry stick became a living branch, budded, and bloomed, and yielded almonds. In some places there were buds, in others blossoms, in others fruit, at the same time; this was miraculous, and took away all suspicion of a fraud, as if in the night Moses had taken away Aaron's rod, and put a living branch of an almond-tree in the room of it; for no ordinary branch would have buds, blossoms, and fruit upon it, all at once. Now, 1. This was a plain indication to the people that Aaron was chosen to the priesthood, and not any other of the princes of the tribes. Thus he was distinguished from them, and manifested to be under the special blessing of heaven, which sometimes yieldeth increase, where there is neither planting nor watering by the hand of man. Bishop Hall here observes, that fruitfulness is the best evidence of a divine call, and that the plants of God's setting, and the boughs cut off from them, will flourish. See *Psal. xcii. 12, 13, 14.* The trees of the Lord, though they seem dry trees, are full of sap. 2. It was a very proper sign to represent the priesthood itself, which was hereby confirmed to Aaron, (1.) That it should be fruitful, useful, and serviceable to the Church of God. It produced not only blossoms but almonds; for the priesthood was designed, not only for an honour to Aaron, but for a blessing to Israel. Thus Christ ordained his apostles and ministers, that they should go and bring forth fruit, and that their fruit should remain, John xv. 16. (2.) That there should be a succession of priests; here were not only almonds for the present, but buds and blossoms, promising more hereafter. Thus hath Christ provided in his Church, that a seed should serve him from generation to generation. (3.) That yet this priesthood should not be perpetual, but in process of time, like the branches and blossoms of a tree, should fade and wither. The flourishing of the almond-tree is mentioned as one of the signs of old age, *Ecc. xii. 5.* This character was betimes put upon that priesthood which soon became old, and ready to vanish away, Heb. viii. 13. 3. It was a type and figure of Christ and his priesthood: for he is the man, the branch, Zech. vi. 12. that is to be a priest upon his throne, as it follows there; and was to grow up before God, as this before the ark, like a tender plant, and a root out of a dry ground, Isa. liii. 2. 2. The record of this determination, by the preserving of the rod before the testimony, in *perpetuam rei memoriam*, ver. 10, 11. It is probable, the buds, and blossoms, and fruit continued fresh, the same divine power that produced them in a night, preserved them for ages, at least so long as it was necessary for a token against the rebels. So it was a standing miracle, and the continuance of it, was an undeniable proof of the truth of it. Even the leaf of God's trees shall not wither, *Psal. i. 3.* This rod was preserved, as the censers were, to take away their murmurings, that they die not. Note, 1. The design of God, in all his providences, both mercies and judgments, and in the memorials of them, is to take away sin, and to prevent that. These things are done, these things written that we sin not, 1 John ii. 1. Christ was manifested to take away sin. 2. What God doth for the taking away of sin, is done in real kindness to us that we die not. All the bitter portions he gives, and all the sharp methods he uses with us, are for the cure of a disease which otherwise would certainly be fatal. Bishop Hall observes here, that the tables of the law, the pot of manna, and Aaron's rod, were preserved together in or about the ark (the apostles take notice of them all three together, *Heb. ix. 4.*) to shew to after-ages how the ancient Church was taught and fed, and ruled; and infers, how precious the doctrine, sacraments, and government of the church is to him, and should be to us. The rod of Moses was used in working many Miracles, yet we do not find that that was preserved, for the keeping of that would serve only to gratify men's curiosity; but the rod of Aaron, which carried its miracle along with it, was carefully preserved, because that would be of standing use to convince men's consciences to silence all disputes about the priesthood, and to confirm the faith of God's Israel in its institutions. Such

is the difference between the sacraments Christ has appointed for edification and the reliques men have devised for superstition. 3. The outcry of the people hereupon, ver. 12, 13. *Behold we die, we perish, we all perish: Shall we be consumed with dying?* This may be considered as the language, either, (1.) Of a repining people, quarrelling with the judgments of God, which by their own pride and obstinacy they had brought upon themselves. They seem to speak despairingly, as if God were a harder master, that sought advantage against them, and took all occasions to pick quarrels with them, so that if they trod ever so little awry, if they stepped ever so little beyond their bounds, they must die, they must perish, they must all perish, basely insinuating, that God would never be satisfied with their blood and ruin, till he had made an end of them all, and they were consumed with dying. Thus they seem to be like a *wild bull in a net, full of the fury of the Lord*, Isa. li. 20. fretting that God was too hard for them, and they were forced to truckle, only because they could not help it. Note, It is a very wicked thing to fret against God when we are in affliction, and in our distress thus to trespass yet more. If we die, if we perish, it is long of ourselves, and the blame will lie upon our own heads. Or, (2.) Of a repenting people; many interpreters take it as speaking their submission. Now we see it is the will of God we should keep our distance, and it is at our peril if we draw nearer than is appointed, and we submit to the divine will in this appointment, we will not contend any more lest we all perish: and they engage Moses to intercede for them, that they might not be all consumed with dying. Thus the point was gained, and in this matter God quite took away their murmurings, and from henceforward they acquiesced. Note, When God judgeth he will overcome, and one way or other will oblige the most obstinate gainsayers to confess their folly sooner or later; and that wherein they dealt proudly he was above them. *Vicijsi Galilee.*

C H A P. XVIII.

Aaron being now fully established in the priesthood, abundantly to his own satisfaction, and to the satisfaction of the people, (which was the good God brought out of the evil opposition made to him) in this chapter God gives him full instructions concerning his office; or rather repeats those he had before given him. He tells him, 1. What must be his work, and the care and charge committed to him: and what assistance he should have from the Levites in that work, ver. 1—7. 2. What should be his wages, and the Levites, for this work. 1. The perquisites or fees peculiar to the priests, ver. 8—19. 2. The settled maintenance of the Levites, ver. 20—24. 3. The portion which must be paid to the priests out of the Levites' maintenance, ver. 25—32. Thus everyone knew what he had to do, and what he had to live upon.

1. **AND** the LORD said unto Aaron, Thou, and thy sons, and thy father's house with thee, shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary; and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood. 2. And thy brethren also of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of thy father, bring thou with thee, that they may be joined unto thee, and minister unto thee: but thou and thy sons with thee, shall minister before the tabernacle of witness. 3. And they shall keep thy charge, and the charge of all the tabernacle: only they shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar, that neither they, nor ye also die. 4. And they shall be joined unto thee, and keep the charge of the tabernacle of the congregation, for all the service of the tabernacle: and a stranger shall not come nigh unto you. 5. And ye shall keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar; that there be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel. 6. And I, behold I, have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel: to you they are given as a gift for the LORD, to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. 7. Therefore thou and thy sons with thee, shall keep your priest's office, for every thing of the altar, and within the vail, and ye shall serve: I have given your priest's office unto you, as a service of gift: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

The coherence of this chapter with that foregoing is very observable.

1. The people, in the close of that chapter, had complained of the difficulty and peril that there were in drawing near to God, which put them under some dreadful apprehensions, that the tabernacle in the midst of them, which they hoped would have been their joy and glory, would rather be their terror and ruin; now in answer to this complaint, God here gives them to understand by Aaron, that the priests should come near for them as their representatives; so that though the people were obliged to keep their distance, yet that should not at all redound to their disgrace or prejudice, but their comfortable communion with God should be kept up by the interposal of the priests. 2. A great deal of honour God had now newly put upon Aaron, his rod had budded and blossomed, when the rods of the rest of the princes remained dry, and destitute either of fruit or ornament; now left Aaron should be puffed up with the abundance of the favours that were done him, and the miracles that were wrought for the support of him in his high station, God comes to him to mind him of the burden that was laid upon him, and the duty required from him as a priest. He would see reason not to be proud of his preferment, but to receive the honour of his office with reverence and holy trembling, when he considered, how great the care and charge was that was committed to him, and how hard it would be for him to give a good account of the discharge of it. *Be not high-minded, but fear.* 1. God tell him of the danger that attended his dignity, ver. 1. (1.) That both the priests and Levites (both thou, and thy sons, and thy father's house) shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary, i. e. If the sanctuary were profaned by the intrusion of strangers, or persons in their uncleanness the blame should lie upon the Levites and priests, who ought to have kept them off. Though the sinner that thrust in presumptuously should

die in his iniquity, yet his blood should be required at the hands of the watchmen. Or, it may be taken more generally, if any of the duties or offices of the sanctuary be neglected, if any service be not done in its season, or not according to the law, if any thing be lost or misplaced in the remove of the sanctuary, you shall be accountable for it, and answer it at your peril. (2.) That the priests should themselves bear the iniquity of the priesthood, i. e. If they either neglect any part of their work, or permitted any other persons to invade their office, and take their work out of their hands, they should bear the blame of it. Note, The greater the trust is of work and power that is committed to us, the greater is our danger of contracting guilt, by falsifying and betraying that trust. This is a good reason, why we should neither be envious at other's honours, nor ambitious ourselves of high places, because great dignity exposes us to great iniquity. Those that are entrusted with the charge of the sanctuary, will have a great deal to answer for. Who would covet the care of souls, who considers the account that must be given of that care? 2. He tells him of the duty that attended his dignity. 1. That he and his sons must minister before the tabernacle of witness, ver. 2. i. e. as Bishop Patrick exclaims it, *before the most holy place*, in which the ark was; on the outside of the vail of that tabernacle, but within the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; they were to attend the golden altar, the table, and candlestick, which no Levite might approach to. *Ye shall serve*, ver. 7. not ye shall rule; it was never intended that they should lord it over God's heritage, but ye shall serve God and the congregation. Note, The priesthood is a service. *If any desire the office of a Bishop, he desires a good work.* Ministers must remember that they are ministers, that is, servants; of whom, it is required, that they be humble, diligent and faithful. 2. That the Levites must assist him and his sons, and minister to them in all the service of the tabernacle, ver. 2, 3, 4. though they must by no means come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary, nor at the altar meddle with the great services of burning the fat and sprinkling the blood. Aaron's family was very small, and as they increased, the rest of the families of Israel would increase likewise, so that their hands neither were now, nor were like to be, sufficient for all the service of the tabernacle, therefore (saith God) *the Levites shall be joined to thee*, ver. 2. again, ver. 4. where there seems to be an allusion to the name of Levi, which signifies joined. Many of the Levites had of late set themselves against Aaron, but from henceforward God promiseth that they should be heartily joined to him in interest and affection, and should no more contend with him. It was a good sign to Aaron that God owned him, when he inclined the hearts of those concerned to own him too. The Levites are said to be given as a gift to the priests, ver. 6. Note, We are to value it as a great gift of the divine bounty to have those joined to us, that will be helpful and serviceable to us in the service of God. 3. That both priests and Levites must carefully watch against the profanation of sacred things. The Levites must keep the charge of the tabernacle, that no stranger (i. e. none who upon any account were forbidden to come) might come nigh, ver. 4. and that upon pain of death, ver. 7. And the priests must keep the charge of the sanctuary, ver. 5. must instruct the people, and admonish them concerning the due distance they were to keep, and not suffer them to break the bounds set them, as Korah's company had done, that there be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel. Note, The preventing of sin is the preventing of wrath; and the mischief sin has done, should be a warning to us for the future, to watch against it both in ourselves and others.

8. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Behold, I also have given thee the charge of mine heave-offerings, of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel; unto thee have I given them, by reason of the anointing, and to thy sons by an ordinance for ever. 9. This shall be thine of the most holy things, reserved from the fire: every oblation of theirs, every meat-offering of theirs, and every sin-offering of theirs, and every trespass-offering of theirs, which they shall render unto me, shall be most holy for thee and for thy sons. 10. In the most holy place shalt thou eat it; every male shall eat it: It shall be holy unto thee. 11. And this is thine; the heave-offering of their gift, with all the wave-offerings of the children of Israel; I have given them unto thee, and to thy sons, and to thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: every one that is clean in thy house shall eat of it. 12. All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the first-fruits of them which they shall offer unto the LORD, them have I given thee. 13. And whatsoever is first ripe in the land, which they shall bring unto the LORD, shall be thine; every one that is clean in thine house shall eat of it. 14. Every thing devoted in Israel, shall be thine. 15. Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the LORD, whether it be of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the first-born of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem. 16. And those that are to be redeemed, from a month old shalt thou redeem according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs. 17. But the firstling of a cow, or the firstling of a sheep, or the firstling of a goat, thou shalt not redeem; they are holy: thou shalt sprinkle their blood upon the altar, and shalt burn their fat for an offering made by fire, for a sweet savour unto the LORD. 18. And the flesh of them shall be thine, as the wave-breast, and as the right shoulder are thine. 19. All the heave-offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the LORD, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever; it is a covenant of salt for ever, before the LORD, unto thee and to thy seed with thee.

The priest's service is called a warfare, and who goes a warfare at his own charges? A: they were well employed, so they were well provided for, and well paid. None shall serve God for nought. All believers are spiritual priests, and God has promised to take care of them; they shall dwell in the land, and verily they shall be fed, and shall not want any good thing. *Godliness has the promise of the life that now is.* And from this plentiful provision here made for the priests, the apostle infers, that it is the duty of Christian Churches to maintain their ministers; they that served at the altar, lived upon the altar. So they that preach the gospel, should live upon the gospel, and live comfortably, 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14. Scandalous maintenance makes scandalous ministers. Now, observe, 1. That much of the provision that was made for them arose out of the sacrifices which they themselves were employed to offer. They had the skins of almost all the sacrifices, which they might sell, and they had a considerable share out of the meat-offerings, sin-offerings, &c. They had the charge of the offerings, had the benefit of them, ver. 8. Note, God's work is its own wages, and his service carries its recompence along with it. Even in keeping of God's commandments there is great reward. The present pleasures of religion are part of its pay. 2. They that had not only a good table kept for them, but money likewise in their pockets for the redemption of the first-born, and those firtings of cattle which might not be offered in sacrifice. Thus their maintenance was such, as left them altogether disentangled from the affairs of this life; they had no grounds to occupy, no land to till, no vineyards to dress, no cattle to tend, no visible estate to take care of, and yet had a more plentiful income than any other families whatsoever. Thus God ordered it, (1.) That they might be the more entirely addicted to their ministry, and not diverted from it, or disturbed in it, by any worldly care or business. The ministry requires a whole man. (2.) That they might be examples of living by faith, not only in God's providences, but in his ordinance. They lived from hand to mouth, that they might learn to take no thought for the morrow; sufficient for the day would be the provision thereof: and they had no estates to leave their children, that they might by faith leave them to the care of that God who had fed them all their lives long. 3. Of the provision that was made for their tables, some is said to be most holy, ver. 2—10. which was to be eaten by the priests themselves and in the court of the tabernacle only; but other perquisites were less holy, of which their families might eat, at their own houses, provided they were clean, ver. 11, 12, 13, see Lev. xxii. 10, &c. 4. It is commanded that the best of the oil, and the best of the wine and wheat should be offered for the first-fruits unto the Lord, which the priest was to have, ver. 12. Note, We must always serve and honour God with the best we have, for he is the best, and best deserves it, he is the first and therefore must have the first ripe. Those that think to save charges by putting God off with the refuse, do but deceive themselves, for God is not mocked. 5. All this is given to the priests, by reason of the anointing, ver. 8. It was not for the sake of their personal merits above other Israelites that they had this tribute, paid them, be it known unto them; but purely for the sake of the office to which they were anointed. Thus all the comforts that are given to the Lord's people, are given them by reason of anointing, which they have received. 6. It is said to be given them by an ordinance for ever, ver. 8. and it is a covenant of salt for ever, ver. 19. as long as the priesthood should continue, this should continue to be the maintenance of it, that this lamp might not go out for want of oil to keep it burning. Thus provision is made, that a gospel ministry should continue till Christ comes, by an ordinance for ever. *Lo, I am with you* (that is, their maintenance and support) *always, even to the end of the world.* Thanks be to the Redeemer, it is the word which he has commanded to a thousand generations.

20. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them, I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel. 21. And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel, for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. 22. Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die. 23. But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: *It shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance.* 24. But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave-offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. 25. And the LORD spake unto Moses saying, 26. Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave-offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe. 27. And this your heave-offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshing-floor; and as the fulness of the wine-press. 28. Thus ye also shall offer an heave-offering unto the LORD, of all your tithes which ye receive of the children of Israel: and he shall give thereof the LORD's heave-offering to Aaron the priest. 29. Out of all your gifts ye shall offer every heave-offering of the LORD, of all the best thereof, even the hallowed part thereof, out of it. 30. Therefore thou shalt say unto them, When ye have heaved the best thereof from it, then it shall be counted unto the Levites, as the increase of the threshing-floor, and as the increase of the wine-press. 31. And ye shall eat it in every place, ye and your households; for it is your reward for your service, in the tabernacle of the congregation. 32. And ye shall bear no sin, by reason of it, when ye have heaved from it the best of

it: neither shall ye pollute the holy things of the children of Israel, lest ye die.

Here is a farther account of the provision that was made both for the Levites and for the priests, out of the country. 1. They must have no inheritance in the land; only cities to dwell in were afterwards allowed them; but no ground to occupy; *Thou shalt not have any part among them*, ver. 20. It is repeated again, ver. 23. and again, ver. 24. *Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance*, either by purchase or descent. God would have them comfortably provided for, but would not have their families over rich, lest they should think themselves above their work, which therefore their wages supposed, and obliged them constantly to attend upon. As Israel was a peculiar people, and not to be numbered among the nations, so Levi, was a particular tribe, and not to be settled as the rest of the tribes, but in all respects distinguished from them. A good reason is given, why they must have no inheritance in the land, for, saith God, *I am thy part, and thine inheritance.* Note, Those that have God for their inheritance, and their portion for ever, ought to look with a holy contempt and indifference upon the inheritances of this world, and not covet their portion in it. *The Lord is my portion, therefore will I hope in him*, and not depend upon any thing I have on this earth, Lam. iii. 24. The Levites shall have no inheritance, and yet they shall live very comfortably and plentifully, to teach us that providence has various ways of supporting those that live in a dependence upon it; the fowls reap not, and yet are fed, the lilies spin not, and yet are clothed; the Levites have no inheritance in Israel, and yet live better than any other tribe. The repetition of that caution, that no Israelite should approach the tabernacle, comes in somewhat abruptly, ver. 22. it seems set in opposition to that order concerning the priests and Levites, that they should have no inheritance in Israel; to shew how God dispenseth his favours variously. The Levites have the honour of attending the tabernacle, which is denied the Israelites; but then the Israelites have the honour of inheritances in Canaan, which is denied the Levites; thus each is kept from either envying or despising the other, and both have reason to rejoice in their lot. The Israelites must not come nigh the tabernacle, but then the Levites must have no inheritance in the land; if ministers expect that people should keep in their sphere, and not intermeddle with sacred offices; let them keep in theirs, and not entangle themselves in secular affairs. 2. But they must both have tithes of the land. Besides the first-fruits which were appropriated to the priests, which the Jews say were to be a fiftieth part, or at least a sixtieth, the tithe also was appropriated. 1. The Levites had the tithes of the people's increase, ver. 21. *I have given* (whose the whole is) *all the tenths in Israel*, of all the products of the land, to the children of Levi, to be divided among them in just proportions, for their service which they serve. The Levites were the smallest tribe of the twelve, and yet besides all other advantages, they had a tenth part of the yearly profits, without the trouble and expence of ploughing and sowing; such care did God take of those that were devoted to his service; not only that they might be well maintained, but that they might be honoured with a national acknowledgment of the good services they did to the public; and owned as God's agents and receivers; for what was a heave-offering, or an offering lifted heaven-ward unto the Lord, was by him consigned to the Levites. 2. The priests had the tenths of the Levites tithes settled upon them. The order for this Moses is directed to give to the Levites, whom God would have to pay it with cheerfulness, rather than the priests to demand it with authority. Speak to the Levites that it be offered by them, rather than levied upon them. Now observe, 1. The Levites were to give God his dues out of their tithes, as well as the Israelites out of their increase. They were God's tenants, and rent was expected from them, nor were they exempted by their office. Thus, now ministers must be charitable out of what they receive; and the more freely they have received, the more freely they must give, and be examples of liberality, ver. 26. *Ye shall offer a heave-offering to the Lord.* Those that are employed to assist the devotions of others, must be sure to pay their own, as a heave-offering to the Lord. Prayers and praises lifted up to God, or rather, the heart lifted up in them, are now our heave-offerings, This (saith God) shall be reckoned to you, as though it were the corn of the threshing-floor, i. e. though it was not the fruit of their own ground, nor of their own labour, as the tithes of other Israelites were, yet being of such as they had, it should be accepted, to the sanctifying of all the rest. 1. This was to be given to Aaron the priest, ver. 28. and to his successors the high-priests, to be divided and disposed of in such proportions, as they should think fit, among the inferior priests. Most of the profits of the priests' office, which were appointed in the former part of the chapter, arising from the sacrifices, those priests had the benefit of them who constantly attended at the altar; but so far as there were many priests employed in the country, to teach and rule, those tithes taken of the Levites, it is probable, were directed by the high-priest for their maintenance. It is the probable conjecture of the learned Bishop Patrick, that the tenth of this last tenth was reserved for the high-priest himself, to support his state and dignity, for otherwise we read not of any peculiar provision made for him. 3. When the Levites had thus paid the tenth of their income, as a heave-offering to the Lord, they had themselves the comfortable enjoyment of the other nine parts, ver. 30. when ye have thus heaved the best from it (for still God's part must be the best) then ye shall eat the rest, not as a holy thing, but with the same freedom that the other Israelites eat their part, in every place, ye and your households, ver. 31. See here what is the way to have the comfort of all our worldly possessions, so as to bear no sin by reason of them, as it follows, ver. 32. 1. We must be sure that what we have be got honestly, and in the service of God. It is your reward for your service; that meat is best eaten, that is first earned; but if any will not work, neither shall ye eat. 2. Thess. iii. 10. And that seems to be spoken of, as having a particular comfort and satisfaction in it, which is the reward of faithful service done in the tabernacle of the congregation. 2. We must be sure that God hath his dues out of it. Then we have the comfort of our substance, when we have honoured the Lord with it. Then ye shall bear no sin by reason of it, when ye have heaved the best from it. This intimates, that we must never feed ourselves without fear, lest our table become a snare, and we bear sin by reason of it; and that therefore we are concerned to give alms of such things as we have, that all may be clean and comfortable to us.

C H A P. XIX.

This chapter is only concerning the preparing and using of the ashes which were to impregnate the water of purification. The people had complained of the strictness of the law, which forbade their near approach to the tabernacle, chap. xvii. 13. In answer to which complaint they are here directed to purify themselves, so as that they might come as far as they had occasion without fear. Here is, 1. The method of preparing these ashes, by the burning of a red heifer, with a great deal of ceremony, ver. 1—10. 2. The way of using them,

them. 1. They were designed to purify persons from the pollution contracted by a dead body, ver. 11—16. 2. They were to be put into running water (a small quantity of them) with which the person to be cleansed must be purified, ver. 17—22. And that this ceremonial purification was a type and figure of the cleansing of the consciences of believers from the pollutions of sin, appears by the apostle's discourse, Heb. ix. 13, 14, where he compares the efficacy of the blood of Christ, with the sanctifying virtue that was in the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean.

1. **A**ND the LORD spake unto Moses, and unto Aaron, saying, 2. This is the ordinance of the law, which the LORD hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke. 3. And ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face. 4. And Eleazar the priest, shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times. 5. And one shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung shall he burn. 6. And the priest shall take cedar-wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer. 7. Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean unto the even. 8. And he that burneth her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the even. 9. And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel, for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin. 10. And he that gathereth the ashes of the heifer, shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: and it shall be unto the children of Israel, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among them, for a statute for ever.

We have here the divine appointment concerning the solemn burning of a red heifer to ashes, and the preserving of the ashes, that of them might be made not a beautifying, but a purifying water, for that was the utmost the law reached to; it offered not to adorn as the gospel doth, but to cleanse only. This burning of the heifer, though it was not properly a sacrifice of expiation, being not performed at the altar, yet was typical of the death and sufferings of Christ; by which he intended not only to satisfy God's justice, but to purify and pacify our consciences, that we may not have only peace with God, but peace in our own bosoms: to prepare for which, Christ died not only like the bulls and goats at the altar, but like the heifer without the camp.

1. There was a great deal of curiosity in the choice of the heifer that was to be burned, much more than in the choice of any other offering, ver. 29. It must not only be without blemish, typifying the spotless purity, and sinless perfection of the Lord Jesus, but it must be a red heifer, because of the rarity of the colour, that it might be the more remarkable; the Jews say, if but two hairs were black or white, it was unlawful. Christ, as man, was the son of Adam, red earth, and we find him red in his apparel, red with his own blood, and red with the blood of his enemies. And it must be one on which never came yoke, which was not insisted on in other sacrifices, but thus was typified the freedom of the Lord Jesus, when he said, *Lo, I come*. He was bound and held with no other cords, but those of his own love. This heifer was to be provided at the expence of the congregation, because they were all to have a joint-interest in it; and so all believers have in Christ. 2. There was to be a great deal of ceremony in the burning of it. The care of doing it was committed to Eleazar, not to Aaron himself, because it was not fit he should do any thing to render himself ceremonially unclean, no, not so much as *till the even*, ver. 8. yet it being an affair of great concern, especially in the significance of it, it was to be performed by him that was next to Aaron in dignity. The chief priests of that time had the principal hand in the death of Christ. Now, 1. The heifer was to be slain without the camp, as an impure thing, which speaks the insufficiency of the methods prescribed by the ceremonial law to take away sin; so far were they from cleansing effectually, that they were themselves unclean? as if the pollution that was laid upon them, continued to cleave to them. Yet to answer this type, our Lord Jesus, being made sin and a curse for us, *suffered without the gate*, Heb. xiii. 11. 2. Eleazar was to *sprinkle the blood directly before the door of the tabernacle*, and looking stedfastly towards it, ver. 4. This made it in some sort an expiation; for the sprinkling of the blood before the Lord was the chief solemnity in all the sacrifices of atonement; therefore though this was not done at the altar, yet being done towards the sanctuary, it was intimated, that the virtue and validity of it depended upon the sanctuary, and was derived from it. This signified that the satisfaction that was made to God by the death of Christ, our great high-priest, who, *by the eternal Spirit*, (and the Spirit is called the finger of God, as Ainsworth observes, Luke xi. 30.) *offered himself without spot unto God*; he did, as it were, sprinkle his own blood directly before the sanctuary, when he said, *Father, into thy hands I commit my Spirit*. And this also signifies, how necessary it was to the purifying of our hearts, that satisfaction should be made to divine justice. This sprinkling of the blood put virtue into the ashes. The heifer was to be *wholly burnt*, ver. 5. This typified the extreme sufferings of our Lord Jesus, both in soul and body, as a sacrifice made by fire. The priest was to cast into the fire, while it was burning, cedar-wood, hyssop, and scarlet, which were used in the cleansing of lepers, Lev. xiv. 6, 7. that the ashes of these might be mingled with the ashes of the heifer, because they were designed for purification. 4. The ashes of the heifer (separated as well as they could from the ashes of the wood, where-with it was burnt) were to be carefully gathered up by the hand of a clean person, and (as the Jews say) pounded and sifted, and so laid up for the use of the congregation, as there was occasion, ver. 9. not only for that generation, but for posterity; for the ashes of this one heifer were sufficient to season as many vessels of water, as the people of Israel would need for many

ages. The Jews say, this one served till the captivity, near a thousand years, and that there was never another heifer burned till Ezra's time, after their return; to which tradition of theirs, grounded (I suppose) only upon the silence of their old records, I see no reason we have to give credit, since in the later times of their Church, which they had more full records of, they find eight burned between Ezra's time, and the destruction of the second temple, which was but about five hundred years. These ashes are said to be laid up here as a purification for sin, because though they were intended only to purify from ceremonial uncleanness, yet they were a type of that purification for sin, which our Lord Jesus made by his death. Ashes mixed with water are used in scouring, but these had their virtue purely from the divine institution, and their accomplishment and perfection in Christ, who is the *end of this law for righteousness*. Now observe, (1.) That the water of purification was made so by the ashes of a heifer, whose blood was sprinkled before the sanctuary; so that which cleanses our consciences is the remaining virtue of the death of Christ; it is his blood that *cleanseth from all sin*, 1 John i. 7. (2.) That the ashes were sufficient for all the people; there needed not to be a fresh heifer slain for every person or family that had occasion to be purified, but this one was enough for all, even for the strangers that *sojourned among them*, ver. 10. so there is virtue enough in the blood of Christ for all that repent, and believe the gospel, for every Israelite; and not for their sins only, but for the *sins of the whole world*, 1 John ii. 2. (3.) That these ashes were capable of being preserved without waste to many ages. No bodily substance is so incorruptible as ashes are, which (saith Bishop Patrick) made these a very fit emblem of the everlasting efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. He is able to save, and in order to that, able to cleanse to the uttermost, both of persons and times. (4.) These ashes were laid up as a stock or treasure, for the constant purification of Israel from their pollutions; so the blood of Christ is laid up for us in the word and sacraments, as an inexhaustible fountain of merit, to which by faith we may have recourse daily, for the purging of our consciences; see *Zech. xiii. 1*. 5. All those that were employed in this service were made ceremonially unclean by it; even Eleazar himself, though he did but sprinkle the blood, ver. 7. He that *burned the heifer was unclean*, ver. 8. and he that *gathered up the ashes*, ver. 10. so all that had a hand in putting Christ to death, contracted guilt by it, his betrayer, his prosecutors, his judge, his executioner, all did what they did with wicked hands, though it was *by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*, Acts ii. 23. yet some of them were, and all might have been, cleansed by the virtue of that same blood, which they had brought themselves under the guilt of. Some make this to signify the imperfection of the legal services, and their insufficiency to take away sin; inasmuch as those who prepared for the purifying of others, were themselves polluted by the preparation. The Jews say, this is a mystery which Solomon himself did not understand, that the same thing should pollute those that were clean, and yet purify those that were unclean. But (saith Bishop Patrick) it is not strange to those who consider that all the sacrifices which were offered for sin, were therefore looked upon as impure, because the sins of men were laid upon them, as all our sins were upon Christ, who therefore is said to be *made sin for us*, 2 Cor. v. 21.

11. ¶ He that toucheth the dead body of any man, shall be unclean seven days. 12. He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean: but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean. 13. Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him. 14. This is the law, when any man dieth in a tent, all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days. 15. And every open vessel which hath no covering bound upon it, is unclean. 16. And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days. 17. And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel: 18. And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave: 19. And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even. 20. But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation: because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the LORD, the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him, he is unclean. 21. And it shall be a perpetual statute unto them, that he that sprinkleth the water of separation, shall wash his clothes, and he that toucheth the water of separation, shall be unclean until even. 22. And whatsoever the unclean person toucheth, shall be unclean; and the soul that toucheth it, shall be unclean until even.

Directions are here given concerning the use and application of the ashes, which were prepared for purification. They were laid up to be laid out, and therefore though now one place would serve to keep them in, while all Israel lay so closely encamped, yet it is probable, afterwards when they came to Canaan, some of these ashes were kept in every town, for there would be daily use of them.

Observe, 1. In what cases there needed a purification with these ashes. No other is mentioned here but the ceremonial uncleanness that was contracted by the *touch of a dead body*, or of the bone or grave of a dead man, or being in the tent or house where a dead body lay, ver. 11—14, 15, 16.

This I look upon to be one of the greatest burdens of the ceremonial law, and one of the most unaccountable. He that touched the carcase of an unclean beast, or any living man under the greatest ceremonial uncleanness, was made unclean by it, only till the even, and needed only common water to purify himself with; but he that came near the dead body of man, woman, or child, must bear the reproach of his uncleanness seven days, must twice be purified with the water of separation, which he could not obtain without trouble and charge, and till he is purified must not come near the sanctuary upon pain of death. This was strange, considering, (1.) That whenever any body died, (and we are in deaths oft) several persons must unavoidably contract this pollution, the body must be stripped, washed, wound up, carried out and buried, and this could not be done without many hands, and yet all defiled; which signifies that in our corrupt and fallen state, *there is none that lives and sins not*; we cannot avoid being polluted by the defiling world we pass through, and we offend daily, yet the impossibility of our being sinless, doth not make sin the less polluting. (2.) That taking care of the dead to see them decently buried, is not only necessary, but a very good office, and an act of kindness, both to the honour of the dead, and the comfort of the living, and yet uncleanness was contracted by it; which intimates, that the pollutions of sin mix with and cleave to our best services. *There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not*; we are apt some way or other to do amiss even in our doing good. (3.) That this pollution was contracted by what was done privately in their own houses, which intimates, (as Bishop Patrick observes) that God sees what is done in secret, and nothing can be concealed from the divine Majesty. (4.) This pollution might be contracted, and yet a man might never know it, as by the touch of a grave which appeared not, of which our Saviour saith, *They that walk over it are not aware of it*, Luke xi. 44. which intimates the defilement of the conscience by sins of ignorance, the cause we have to cry out, *Who can understand his errors; and to pray, cleanse us from secret faults, faults which we ourselves do not see ourselves guilty of*.

But why did the law make a dead corps such a defiling thing? 1. Because death is the wages of sin, entered into the world by it, and reigns by the power of it. Death to mankind is another thing from what it is to other creatures, it is a curse, it is the execution of the law, and therefore the defilement of death signifies the defilement of sin. 2. Because the law could not conquer death, nor abolish it and alter the property of it, as the gospel doth by bringing life and immortality to light, and so introducing a better hope. Since our Redeemer was dead and buried, death is no more destroying to the Israel of God, and therefore dead bodies are no more defiling; but while the Church was under the law, to shew that it *made not the comers thereunto perfect*, the pollution contracted by dead bodies, could not but form in their minds melancholy and uncomfortable notions concerning death, whilst believers now through Christ can triumph over it. *O grave, where is thy victory! Where is thy pollution!* 2. How the ashes were to be used, and applied in these cases. 1. A small quantity of the ashes must be put into a cup of spring water, and mixed with the water, which thereby was made as it is here called a *water of separation*, because it was to be sprinkled on those who were separated or removed from the sanctuary by their uncleanness. As the *ashes of the heifer* signified the merit of Christ, so the *running water* signified the power and grace of the blessed Spirit, who is compared to rivers of living water; and it is by his operation that the righteousness of Christ is applied to us for our cleansing: Hence we are said to be washed, that is, *sanctified and justified*, not only in the name of the Lord Jesus, but by the *Spirit of our God*, 1 Cor. vi. 11. 1 Pet. i. 2. Those that promise themselves benefit by the righteousness of Christ, while they submit not to the grace and influence of the Spirit, do but deceive themselves, for we cannot put asunder what God has joined, nor be purified by the ashes otherwise than in the running water. 2. This water must be applied by a bunch of hyssop dipped in it, with which the person or thing to be cleansed must be sprinkled, ver. 18. in allusion to which David prays, *purge me with hyssop*. Faith is the bunch of hyssop wherewith the conscience is sprinkled and the heart purified. Many might be sprinkled at once, and the water with which the ashes were mingled might serve for many sprinklings, till it was all spent; and a very little lighting upon a man served to purify him, if done with that intention. In allusion to this application of the water of separation by sprinkling, the blood of Christ is said to be the *blood of sprinkling*, Heb. xii. 24. and with it we are said to be *sprinkled from an evil conscience*, Heb. x. 22. i. e. we are freed from the uncleanness that ariseth from a sense of our guilt. And it is foretold, that Christ by his baptism shall *sprinkle many nations*, Isa. lii. 15. 3. The unclean person must be sprinkled with this water on the third day after his pollution, and on the seventh day, ver. 12—19. The days were reckoned (we may suppose) from the last time of his touching or coming near the dead body; for he would not begin the days of his cleansing, while he was still under a necessity of repeating the pollution; but when the dead body was buried, so that there was no farther occasion of meddling with it, then he began to reckon his days. Then and then only we may with comfort apply Christ's merit to our souls, when we have forsaken sin, and cease all fellowship with the unfruitful works of death and darkness. The repetition of the sprinkling, teacheth us often to renew the actings of repentance and faith; as Naaman, seven times; we have need to do that often, which it is so necessary should be well done. 4. Though the pollution contracted was only ceremonial, yet the neglect of the purification prescribed, would turn into a moral guilt; *He that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off*, ver. 20. Note, It is a dangerous thing to contemn divine institutions, though they may seem minute. A light wound if neglected may prove fatal; a sin we call little, if not repented of, will be our ruin, when great sinners that repent shall find mercy. Our uncleanness separates us from God, but it is our being unclean and not purifying ourselves that will separate us for ever from him; it is not the wound that is fatal, so much as the contempt of the remedy. 5. Even he that sprinkled the water of separation, or touched it, or touched the unclean person, must be unclean till the even, i. e. must not come near the sanctuary on that day, ver. 21, 22. Thus God would shew them the imperfection of those services, and their insufficiency to purify the conscience, that they might look for the Messiah, who in the fulness of time should by the eternal Spirit offer himself without spot unto God, and so *purge our consciences from dead works*, (i. e. from sin, which defiles like a dead body, and is therefore called a *body of death*) that we may have liberty of access to the sanctuary, to serve the living God with living sacrifices.

C H A P. XX.

At this chapter begins the history of the fortieth year (which was the last) of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness. And since the beginning of their second year, when they were sentenced to make their quarantine in the desert, there to wear away the tedious revolutions of forty years, there is little recorded concerning them till this last year, which brought them to the borders of Canaan, and the history

of this year is almost as large as the history of the first year. This chapter is, 1. Concerning the death of Miriam, ver. 1. 2. The fetching of water out of the rock. In which observe, (1.) The distress Israel was in for want of water, ver. 2. (2.) Their discontent and murmuring in that distress, ver. 3, 4, 5. (3.) God's pity and power engaged for their supply with water out of the rock, ver. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. (4.) The infirmity of Moses and Aaron upon this occasion, ver. 11. (5.) God's displeasure against them, ver. 12, 13. 3. The treaty with the Edomites. Israel's request, ver. 14—17. and the repulse the Edomites gave them, ver. 18—22. 4. The death of Aaron the high-priest upon mount Hor, the instalment of Eleazar in his room, and the people's mourning for him, ver. 22—29.

1. **T**HEN came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin, in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there. 2. And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. 3. And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD. 4. And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? 5. And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink. 6. And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them. 7. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 8. Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes, and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation, and their beasts drink. 9. And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him. 10. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? 11. And Moses lift up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. 12. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel; therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. 13. This is the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel strove with the LORD: and he was sanctified in them.

After eight and thirty years tedious marches or rather tedious rests in the wilderness, backwards towards the Red sea, the armies of Israel now at length set their faces towards Canaan again, and are come not far off from the place where they were, when, by the righteous sentence of divine justice, they were made to begin their wanderings. Hitherto they had been let about as in a maze or labyrinth, while execution was doing upon the rebels that were sentenced; but they were now brought in the right way again: they abode in Kadesh, ver. 1. not Kadesh-barnea, which was near the borders of Canaan, but another Kadesh on the confines of Edom, farther off from the land of promise, yet in the way to it from the Red sea, to which they had been hurried back.

Now, 1. Here Miriam dies; the sister of Moses and Aaron, and as it should seem elder than either of them. She must be so if she was that sister that was set to watch Moses, when he was put into the ark of bulrushes, Exod. ii. 4. ver. 1. *Miriam died there*. She was a prophetess, had been an instrument of much good to Israel, Micah vi. 4. When Moses and Aaron with their rod went before them to work wonders for them, Miriam with her timbrel went before them in praising God for these wonderful works, Exod. xv. 20. And therein did them real service, yet she had once been a murmurer, Numb. xii. 1. and must not enter Canaan. 2. Here there is another Meribah; one place we meet with before of that name, in the beginning of their march through the wilderness, which was so called, because of the chidings of the children of Israel, Exod. xvii. 7. And now we have another place, at the latter end of their march, which bears the same name, and for the same reason; *this is the water of Meribah*, ver. 13. What was there done was here re-acted. 1. *There was no water for the congregation*, ver. 2. The water out of the rock of Rephidim had followed them while there was need of it; but it is probable, that for some time, they had been in a country where they were supplied in an ordinary way, and the common providence supplied them, it was fit the miracle should cease: but in this place it fell out there was no water, or not sufficient for the congregation. Note, We live in a wanting world, and wherever we are, must expect to meet with some inconvenience or other. It is a great mercy to have plenty of water, a mercy which if we found the want of we should own the worth of. 2. Hereupon they murmured; mutinied, ver. 2. *Gathered themselves together*, and took up arms against Moses and Aaron. They chid with them, ver. 3. Spoke the same abominable and brutish language that their fathers had done before them; (1.) They wished they had died as malefactors by the hands of divine justice, rather than thus seem for a while neglected by the divine mercy. *Would God we had died when our brethren died before the Lord*. Instead of giving God thanks as they ought to have done, for sparing them, they not only despise the mercy of their reprieve, but quarrel with it, as if God had done them a great deal of wrong, in giving them their lives for a prey, and snatching them as brands out of the burning. But they need not wish they had died with their brethren, they are here taking the ready way to die, like their brethren, in a little while.

Wo unto them that desire the day of the Lord, Amos v. 18. (2.) They are angry that they were brought out of Egypt, and led through this wilderness, ver. 4, 5. They quarrel with Moses for that which they knew was the Lord's doing; they represent that as an injury, which was the greatest favour that ever was done to any people. They prefer slavery before liberty; the house of bondage before the land of promise: and though the present want was of water only, yet now they are disposed to find fault, it shall be looked upon as an insufferable hardship put upon them that they have not vines and figs. It was an aggravation of their crime, (1.) That they had smarted so long for the discontents and distrusts of their fathers. They had borne their whoredoms now almost forty years in the wilderness, chap. xiv. 33. And yet they venture in the same steps, and, as is charged upon Balaazar, *humble not their hearts though they knew all this*, Dan. v. 22. (2.) That they had had such long and constant experience of God's goodness to them, and of the tenderness and faithfulness of Moses and Aaron. (3.) That Miriam was now newly dead; and having lost one of their leaders, they ought to have been more respectful to those that were left; but as if they were resolved to provoke God to leave them as sheep without any shepherd, they grow outrageous against them. Instead of condoling with Moses and Aaron for the death of their sister, they add affliction to their grief. 3. Moses and Aaron made them no reply, but retired to the door of the tabernacle to know God's mind in this case, ver. 6. There they fell on their faces, as formerly on the like occasion, to deprecate the wrath of God, and to intreat direction from him. Here is no mention of any thing they said, they knew God heard the murmurings of the people, and before him they humbly prostrate themselves, making intercession with groans that cannot be uttered. There they lay waiting for orders. *Speak, Lord, for thy servants hear.* 4. God appeared to determine the matter; not on his tribunal of justice, to sentence the rebels according to their deserts, no, he will not return to destroy Ephraim, will not always chide, see Gen. viii. 21. But he appeared, (1.) On his throne of glory to silence their unjust murmuring, ver. 6. The glory of the Lord appeared, to still the tumult of the people, by striking an awe upon them. Note, A believing sight of the glory of the Lord would be an effectual check to our lusts and passions, and would keep our mouths as with a bridle. (2.) On his throne of grace to satisfy their just desires. It was requisite they should have water, and therefore though the manner of their petitioning for it was irregular and disorderly, yet God did not take that advantage against them to deny it them, but gave immediate orders for their supply, ver. 8. Moses must a second time in God's name command water out of a rock for them, to shew that God is as able as ever to supply his people with good things, even in their greatest straits, and the utmost failure of second causes. Almighty power can bring water out of a rock, has done it, and can again, for his arm is not shortened. Left it should be thought that there was something peculiar in the former rock itself, some secret spring which nature hid before it, God here bids him broach another, and doth not as then direct him which he must apply to, but let him make use of which he pleased, or the first he came to; all alike to omnipotence. (1.) God bids him take the rod, that famous rod with which he had summoned the plagues of Egypt, and divided the sea, that having that in his hand, both he and the people might be minded of the great things God had formerly done for them, and might be encouraged to trust in him now. This rod, it seems, was kept in the tabernacle, ver. 9. for it was the rod of God, the rod of his strength, as the gospel is called, *Psal.* cx. 2. perhaps in allusion to it. (2.) God bids him gather the assembly, not the elders only but the people, to be witnesses of what was done, that by their own eyes they might be convinced and made ashamed of their unbelief. There is no fallacy in God's works of wonder, and therefore they shun not the light, nor the inspection and enquiry of many witnesses. (3.) He bids him speak to the rock, which would do as it was bidden, to shame the people who had been so often spoken to, and would not hear, or obey. Their hearts were harder than this rock, not so tender, nor so yielding, not so obedient. (4.) He promiseth that the rock should give forth water, ver. 8. and it did so, ver. 11. The water came out abundantly. This is an instance not only of the power of God, that he could thus fetch honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock, but of his mercy and grace, that he would do it for such a provoking people. This was upon the matter a new generation, most of the old stock were by this time worn off, yet they were as bad as those that went before them; murmuring ran in the blood, yet the entail of the divine favour was not cut off; but in this instance of it, the divine patience shines as bright as the divine favour. He is God and not man, in sparing and pardoning; nay, he not only here gave them the drink which they drank of, in common with their beasts, ver. 8—11. but in it he made them drink spiritual drink, which typified spiritual blessings, for that rock was Christ. (5.) Moses and Aaron missed it in the management of this matter, and missed it so much, that God in displeasure told them immediately they should not have the honour of bringing Israel into Canaan, ver. 10, 11, 12. This is a strange passage of story, yet very instructive.

1. It is certain that God was greatly offended, and justly, for he is never angry without cause. Though they were his servants, and had obtained mercy to be faithful, though they were his favourites, and such as he had highly honoured, yet for something they thought or said, or did upon this occasion, he put them under the disgrace and mortification of dying as other unbelieving Israelites did, short of Canaan. And, no doubt, the crime deserved the punishment. 2. Yet it is uncertain what it was in this management that was so provoking to God. The fault was complicated, 1. They did not punctually observe their orders, but in some things varied from their commission; God bids them speak to the rock, and they spake to the people, and smote the rock, which at this time they were not ordered to do, but they thought speaking would not do. When in distrust of the power of the Word, we have recourse to the secular power in matters of pure conscience, we do, as Moses here, smite the rock we should only speak to. 2. They assumed too much of the glory of this work of wonder to themselves; *Must we fetch water?* as if it were done by some power or worthiness of theirs. Therefore it is charged upon them, ver. 12. that they did not sanctify God, i. e. they did not give him that glory of this miracle which was due unto his name. 3. Unbelief was the great transgression, ver. 12. *Ye believe me not*, nay, it is called, *rebellious against God's commandment*, Numb. xxvii. 14. The command was to bring water out of the rock, but they rebelled against this command by distrusting it, and doubting whether it would take effect or no. They speak doubtfully, *Must we fetch water?* And probably, they did some other ways discover an uncertainly in their own minds, whether water would come or no, for such a rebellious generation as this was. And perhaps they rather questioned it, though God had promised it, because the glory of the Lord did not appear before them upon this rock, as it had done upon the rock in Rephidim, Exod. xvii. 6. They would not take God's word without a sign. Dr. Lightfoot's notion of their unbelief is, that they doubted whether now at last when the forty years were expired they should enter Canaan, and whether they must not for the murmurings of the people be condemned to another like fatigue, because a new rock was now opened for their supply, which they took for an indication of their longer stay. And if so, justly were

they kept out of Canaan themselves, while the people entered at the time appointed. 4. They said and did all in heat and passion; this is the account given of the sin, *Psal.* cvi. 33. *They provoked his spirits so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips.* It was in his passion that he called them rebels; it is true they were so, God had called them so, as Moses afterwards, in the way of a just reproof, *Deut.* ix. 24. calls them so without offence, but now it came from a provoked spirit, and was spoken unadvisedly; it was too like *Raca*, and *Thou fool*. His smiting of the rock twice, (it should seem, not waiting at all for the eruption of the water upon the first stroke) speaks him in a heat. The same thing said and done with meekness may be justifiable, which when said and done in anger may be highly culpable, see *1. Jan.* i. 20. 5. That which aggravated all the rest, and made it the more provoking, was, that it was public, before the eyes of the children of Israel, to whom they should have been examples of faith, and hope, and meekness. We find Moses guilty of a sinful distrust, *Numb.* xi. 22, 23. That was private between God and him, and therefore was only checked, but this was public, it dishonoured God before Israel, as if he grudged them his favours, and discouraged the people's hope in God, and therefore this was severely punished, and the more because of the dignity and eminency of them that offended.

From the whole we may learn, 1. That the best of men have their failings, even in those graces that they are most eminent for. The man Moses was very meek, and yet here he sinned in passion; wherefore let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall. 2. That God judgeth not as man judgeth concerning sins; we would think there was not much amiss in what Moses said and did, yet God saw cause to animadvert severely upon it. He knows the frame of men's spirits, what temper they are of, and what temper they are in upon particular occasions; and from what thoughts and intents words and actions do proceed; and we are sure that therefore his judgment is according to truth, when it agrees not with ours. 3. That God not only takes notice of, and is displeased with the sins of his people, but the nearer any are to him, the more offensive are their sins, *Amos* iii. 2. It should seem the Psalmist refers to this sin of Moses and Aaron, *Psal.* xcix. 8. *Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance on their inventions.* As many are spared in this life, and punished in the other, so many are punished in this life, and spared in the other. 4. That when our heart is hot within us, we are concerned to take heed that we offend not with our tongue. Yet 5. It is an evidence of the sincerity of Moses, and his impartiality in writing, that he himself left this upon record concerning himself, and drew not a veil over his own infirmity; by which it appeared, that in what he wrote, as well as in what he did, he sought God's glory more than his own.

Lastly, The place is hereupon called Meribah, ver. 12. It is called Meribah-kadesh, *Deut.* xxxii. 51. to distinguish it from the other Meribah. It is the water of strife; to perpetuate the remembrance of the people's sin, and Moses's, and yet of God's mercy, who supplied them with water, and owned and honoured Moses notwithstanding. Thus he was sanctified in them, as the holy One of Israel, so he is called when his mercy rejoiceth against judgment, *Hos.* xi. 9. Moses and Aaron did not sanctify God as they ought in the eyes of Israel, ver. 12. but God was sanctified in them; for he will not be a loser in his honour by any man. If he be not glorified by us, he will be glorified upon us.

14. ¶ And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh, unto the king of Edom, Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travel that hath befallen us: 15. How our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time: and the Egyptians vexed us, and our fathers. 16. And when we cried unto the LORD, he heard our voice, and sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt: and behold, we are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border. 17. Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's high-way, we will not turn to the right-hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders. 18. And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword. 19. And the children of Israel said unto him, We will go by the high-way; and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it; I will only (without doing any thing else) go through on my feet. 20. And he said, Thou shalt not go through. And Enom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand. 21. Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border; wherefore Israel turned away from him.

We have here the treaty between Israel and the Edomites; the next way to Canaan from the place where Israel now lay encamped, was through the country of Edom. Now, 1. Moses sends ambassadors to treat with the king of Edom for leave to pass through his country, and gives them instructions what to say, ver. 14—17. (1.) They are to claim kindred with the Edomites. *Thus saith thy brother Israel.* Both nations descended from Abraham and Isaac, their common ancestors, Esau and Jacob, the two fathers of their several nations, were twin-brothers; and therefore, for relation sake, they might reasonably expect this kindness from them; nor needed the Edomites to fear that their brother Israel had any ill design upon them, or would take any advantages against them. (2.) They are to give a short account of the history and present state of Israel, which, they take it for granted the Edomites were no strangers to. And in this there was a double plea; 1. Israel had been abused by the Egyptians, and therefore ought to be pitied and succoured by their relations; *the Egyptians vexed us and our fathers*, but we may hope our brethren the Edomites will not be so vexatious; 2. Israel had been wonderfully saved by the Lord, and therefore ought to be countenanced and favoured, ver. 16. *We cried unto the Lord, and he sent an angel*, the angel of his presence, the angel of the covenant, the eternal Word, who has brought us forth out of Egypt, and led us hither. It was therefore the interest of the Edomites, to ingratiate themselves with a people that had so great an interest in heaven, and were so much its favourites, and it was at their peril if they offered them any injury. It is our wisdom and duty to be kind to those whom God is pleased to own, and to take his people for our people. *Come in, thou blessed of the Lord.* (3.) They are humbly to beg a passport through their country. Though God himself, in the

the pillar of cloud and fire, was Israel's guide, in following which they might have justified their passing through any man's ground against all the world; yet God would have this respect paid to the Edomites, to shew, that no man's property ought to be invaded under colour of religion. Dominion is founded in providence, not in grace. Thus when Christ was to pass through a village of the Samaritans, to whom his coming was likely to be offensive, he *sent messengers before his face* to ask leave, *Luke ix. 52.* Those that would receive kindness, must not disdain to request it. (1.) They are to give security for the good behaviour of the Israelites in this march; that they would keep in the king's high road, that they would commit no trespass upon any man's property, either in ground or water, that they would nor so much as make use of a well, but they would pay for it, and that they would make all convenient speed, as fast as they could well go on their feet, *ver. 17—19.* Nothing could be offered more fair and neighbourly. 2. The ambassadors returned with a denial, *ver. 18.* Edom, that is, the king of Edom, as protector of his country, said, *Thou shalt not pass by me;* and when the ambassadors urged it farther, he repeated the denial, *ver. 20.* and threatened, if they offered to enter his country, it should be at their peril; he raised his trained-bands to oppose them. *Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage.* This was owing, 1. To their jealousy of the Israelites, they feared they should receive damage by them, and would not trust their promises. And truly had this numerous army been under any other discipline and command but that of the righteous God himself, who would no more suffer them to do wrong, than to take wrong, there might have been cause for this jealousy; but what could they fear from a nation that had *statutes and judgments so righteous?* 2. It was owing to the old enmity which Esau bore to Israel: If they had no reason to fear damage by them, yet they were not willing to shew so much kindness to them. Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing, and now the hatred revived, when the blessing was ready to be inherited. God would hereby discover the ill nature of the Edomites to their shame, and try the good-nature of the Israelites to their honour, they *turned away from him*, and did not take this occasion to quarrel with him. Note, We must not think it strange, if the most reasonable requests be denied by unreasonable men; and if those be affronted by men, whom God favours. *I as a deaf man heard not.* After this indignity which the Edomites did to Israel, God gave them a particular caution *not to abhor an Edomite*, *Deut. xxiii. 7.* though the Edomites had shewed such an abhorrence of them, to teach us in such cases not to meditate revenge.

22. ¶ And the children of Israel, *even* the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh, and came unto mount Hor. 23. And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, 24. Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. 25. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto mount Hor: 26. And strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there. 27. And Moses did as the LORD commanded: and they went up into mount Hor, in the sight of all the congregation. 28. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount. 29. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty years, *even* all the house of Israel.

This chapter began with the funeral of Miriam, and it ends with the funeral of her brother Aaron: When death comes into a family, it often strikes double. Israel had not improved the former affliction they were under by the death of the prophets, and therefore soon after God took away their priest to try if they would lay that to heart. This happened at the very next stage, when they removed to mount Hor, fetching a compass about the Edomites country, leaving it on their left hand. Wherever we go death attends us, and the graves are ready for us.

1. God bids Aaron die, *ver. 24.* God takes Moses and Aaron aside, and tells them, *Aaron shall be gathered to his people;* these two dear brothers are told that they must part, Aaron the eldest must die first, but Moses is not likely to be long after him; so that it is but for a while, a little while, that they are parted. (1.) There is something of displeasure in these orders; Aaron must not enter Canaan, because he had failed in his duty at the waters of strife. The mention of this, no doubt, went to the heart of Moses, who knew himself, perhaps at that time, more guilty of the two. (2.) There is much of mercy in them. Aaron, though he die for his transgression, is not put to death as a malefactor, by a plague, or fire from heaven, but dies with ease, and in honour. He is not cut off from his people, as the expression usually is, concerning those that die by the hand of divine justice, but he is gathered to his people, as one that died in the arms of divine grace. (3.) There is much of type and significancy in them. Aaron must not enter Canaan, to shew that the Levitical priesthood could make nothing perfect, that must be done by the bringing in of a better hope. Those priests could not continue by reason of sin and death, but the priesthood of Christ being undefiled, is unchangeable, and to this, which abideth for ever, Aaron must resign all his honour, *Heb. vii. 23, 24, 25.* 2. Aaron submits and dies in the method and manner appointed, and for ought appears, with as much cheerfulness as if he had been going to bed. (1.) He puts on his holy garments, to take his leave of them, and goes up with his brother and son to the top of mount Hor, and probably some of the elders of Israel with him, *ver. 27.* They went up *in the sight of all the congregation*, who, it is likely, were told on what errand they went up; by this solemn procession Aaron let Israel know, that he is neither afraid nor ashamed to die, but, when the bridegroom comes, can trim his lamps, and go forth to meet him. His going up the hill to die, signified, that the death of saints (and Aaron is called *the saint of the Lord*) is their ascension; they rather go up than go down to death. (2.) Moses, whose hands had first clothed Aaron with his priestly garments, now strips him of them; for in reverence to the priesthood, it was not fit he should die in them. Note, Death will strip us; naked we came into the world, and naked we must go out. We shall see little reason to be proud of our clothes, our ornaments, or marks of honour, if we consider how soon death will strip us of our glory, divest us of all our offices and honours, and take the crown off from our head. No. XXIV.

(3.) Moses immediately puts the priestly garments upon Eleazar his son, clothes him with his father's robe, and *strengthens him with his girdle*, *Isa. xxii. 21.* Now, 1. This was a great comfort to Moses, by whose hand the law of the priesthood was given, to see, that it should be kept up in a succession, and that a lamp was ordained for the anointed, which should not be extinguished by death itself. This was a happy earnest and indication to the Church of the care God would take, that as one generation of ministers and Christian (spiritual priests) *puffeth away*, another generation shall come up instead of it. 2. It was a great satisfaction to Aaron, to see his son, who was dear to him, thus preferred, and his office, which was dearer, thus preserved and secured: and especially, to see in this a figure of Christ's, everlasting priesthood, in which alone his would be perpetuated; Now, Lord, might Aaron say, *Let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* 3. It was a great kindness to the people. The installing of Eleazar before Aaron was dead, would prevent those, who bore ill-will to Aaron's family, from attempting to set up another upon his death, in competition with his son; What could they do when the matter was already settled? It would likewise encourage those among them that feared God, and be a token for good to them, that he would not leave them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. (4.) *Aaron died there.* Presently after he was stripped of his priestly garments, he laid him down and died contentedly; for a good man would desire, if it were the will of God, not to out-live his usefulness. Why should we covet to continue any longer in this world, than while we may do God and our generation some service in it? (5.) Moses and Eleazar, with those that attended them, buried Aaron there where he died, as appears by *Deut. x. 6.* and then came down from the mount. And now, when they came down, and had left Aaron behind, it might be proper for them to think, that he was rather gone up to the better world, and had left them behind. (6.) All the congregation mourned for Aaron thirty days, *ver. 29.* Though the loss was well made up in Eleazar, who being in the prime of his time, was fitter for public service, than Aaron would have been if he had lived, yet it was a debt owing to their deceased high-priest to mourn for him. While he lived they were murmuring at him upon all occasions, but now he was dead, they mourned for him. Thus many are taught to lament the loss of those mercies, which they would not learn to be thankful for the enjoyment of. Many good men have had more honour done to their memories, than ever they had to their persons; witness those that were persecuted while they lived, but when they were dead, had their sepulchres garnished.

C H A P. XXI.

The armies of Israel now begin to emerge out of the wilderness, and to come into a land inhabited; to enter upon action, and take possession of the frontiers of the land of promise. A glorious campaign this chapter gives us the history of, especially in the latter part of it. Here is, 1. The defeat of Arad the Canaanite, *ver. 1—3.* 2. The chastisement of the people with fiery serpents for their murmurings, and the relief granted them upon their submission by a brazen serpent, *ver. 4—9.* 3. Several marches forward, and some occurrences by the way, *ver. 10—20.* 4. The celebrated conquest of Sihon, king of the Amorites, *ver. 21—32.* and of Og, king of Bashan, *ver. 33—35.* And possession taken of their land.

1. **A**ND when king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies, then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners. 2. And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities. 3. And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them, and their cities; and he called the name of the place Hormah.

Here is, 1. The descent which Arad the Canaanite made upon the camp of Israel, hearing that they came by the way of the spies; for though the spies Moses had sent thirty years before, then passed and repassed unobserved, yet their coming, and their errand, it is likely, was afterwards known to the Canaanites, gave them an alarm, and obliged them to keep an eye upon Israel and get intelligence of all their motions. Now when they understood they were facing about towards Canaan, this Arad thinking it policy to keep the war at a distance, made an onset upon them, and fought with them. But it proved, that he meddled to his own hurt; had he sitten still, his people might have been last destroyed of all the Canaanites, but now they were the first. Thus they that are *overmuch wicked, die before their time*, *Eccles. vii. 17.* 2. His success at first in this attempt. His advance-guards picked up some straggling Israelites and took them prisoners, *ver. 1.* This, no doubt, puffed him up, and he began to think he should have the honour of crushing this formidable body, and saving his country from the ruin it threatened them. It was likewise a trial to the faith of the Israelites, and a check to them for their distrusts and discontents. 3. Israel's humble address to God upon this occasion, *ver. 2.* It was a temptation to them a murmur as their fathers did, and to despair of getting possession of Canaan; but God who thus tried them by his providence, enabled them by his grace to quit themselves well in the trial, and to trust in God for relief against this fierce and powerful assailant. They, by their elders, in prayer for success, *vowed a vow.* Note, When we are desiring, and expecting mercy from God, we should bind our souls with a bond that we will faithfully do our duty to him, particularly that we will honour him with the mercy we are in the pursuit of. Thus Israel here promised to destroy the cities of these Canaanites, as devoted to God, and not to take the spoil of them to their own use. If God would give them victory, he should have all the praise, and they would not make a gain of it to themselves. When we are in this frame, we are prepared to receive mercy. 4. The victory which the Israelites obtained over the Canaanites, *ver. 3.* A strong party was sent out, probably under the command of Joshua, which not only drove back these Canaanites, but followed them to their cities, which probably lay on the edge of the wilderness, and utterly destroyed them, and so returned to the camp. *Vincimur in praelio, sed non in bello.* What is said of the tribe of Gad, is true of all God's Israel, a troop may overcome them, but they shall overcome at the last. The place was called Hormah, as a memorial of the destruction, for the terror of the Canaanites, and probably for warning to posterity not to attempt the re-building of these cities, which were destroyed as devoted to God, and sacrifices to divine justice. And it appears by the instance of Jericho, that the law concerning

such cities was, that they should never be rebuilt. There seems to be an allusion to this name in the prophecy of the fall of the New Testament Babylon, *Rev. xvi. 16.* Where its forces are said to be gathered together to a place called Arma-geddon: the *destruction of a troop.*

4. ¶ And they journeyed from mount Hor, by the way of the Red-sea, to compass the land of Edom; and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. 5. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness? for *there is no bread, neither is there any water*, and our soul loatheth this light bread. 6. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people; and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died. 7. ¶ Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD that he take away the serpents from us: and Moses prayed for the people. 8. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. 9. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

Here is, 1. The fatigue of Israel by a long march round the land of Edom, because they could not obtain passage through it the next way, *ver. 4.* *The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.* Perhaps the way was rough and uneven, or foul and dirty; or it fretted them to go so far about, and that they were not permitted to force their passage through the Edomites' country. Those that are of a fretful discontented spirit, will always find something or other to make them uneasy. 2. Their unbelief and murmuring upon this occasion, *ver. 5.* Though they had just now obtained a glorious victory over the Canaanites, and were going on conquering and to conquer; yet they speak very discontentedly of what God had done for them, and distrustfully of what he would do, vexed that they were brought out of Egypt, that they had not bread and water as other people had by their own care and industry, but by miracles, they know not how. They have bread enough, and to spare; and yet they complain *there is no bread*, because, though they eat angels' food, yet they are weary of it; manna itself is loathed, and called *light bread*, fit for children, not for men and soldiers. What will they be pleased with, whom manna will not please? They that are disposed to quarrel, will find fault where there is no fault to be found. Thus those who have long enjoyed the means of grace, are apt to surfeit even on the heavenly manna, and to call it light bread. But let not the contempt which some cast upon the word of God, make us to value it the less: It is the bread of life, substantial bread, and will nourish those who by faith feed upon it to life eternal, whoever calls it light bread. 3. The righteous judgment God brought upon them for their murmuring, *ver. 6.* He sent *fiery serpents among them*, which bit or stung many of them to death. The wilderness through which they had passed, was all along infested with these fiery serpents, as appears, *Deut. viii. 15.* But hitherto God had wonderfully preserved his people from receiving hurt by them, till now that they murmured; to chastise them for which, these animals, which had hitherto shunned their camp, now invade it. Justly are those made to feel God's judgments that are not thankful for his mercies. These serpents are called fiery, either from their colour, or from their rage, or from the effects of their bitings, inflaming the body, put it presently into a high fever, scorching it with an insatiable thirst. They had unjustly complained for want of water, *ver. 5.* To chastise them for which, God sends upon them this thirst, which no water would quench. They that cry without cause, have justly cause given them to cry out. They distrustfully concluded that they must die in the wilderness, and God took them at their word, chose their delusions, and brought their unbelieving fears upon them, many of them did die. They had impudently flown in the face of God himself, and the *poison of asps was under their lips*, and now these fiery serpents, which it should seem were flying serpents, *Isa. xiv. 29.* flew in their faces and poisoned them. They in their pride had lifted up themselves against God and Moses, and now God humbled and mortified them, by making these despicable animals a plague to them. That artillery is now turned against them, which had formerly been made use of in their defence against the Egyptians: He that brought quails to feast them, let them know he could bring serpents to bite them; the whole creation is at war with those that are in arms against God. 4. Their repentance and supplication to God under this judgment, *ver. 7.* They confess their fault, *we have sinned*; they are particular in the confession, *we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee*; it is to be feared, they had not owned the sin, if they had not felt the smart; but they relent under the rod; *when he slew them, then they sought him.* They beg the prayers of Moses for them, as conscious to themselves of their own unworthiness to be heard, and convinced of the great interest Moses had in heaven. How soon is their tone altered! They who but just before had quarrelled with him as their worst enemy, now make their court to him as their best friend, and choose him for their advocate with God. Afflictions often change men's sentiments concerning God's people, and teach them to value those prayers which, when time was, they had scorned. Moses, to shew that he had heartily forgiven them, blesses them who had cursed him, and prays for them who had spitefully used him. Herein he was a type of Christ, who interceded for his persecutors, and a pattern for us to go and do likewise, and thus to shew that we love our enemies. 5. The wonderful provision God made for their relief. He did not employ Moses in summoning the judgment, but that he might recommend him to the good affection of the people, he made him instrumental in their relief, *ver. 8, 9.* God ordered Moses to make the representation of a fiery serpent, which he did in brass, and set it up on a very long pole, so as it might be seen from all parts of the camp, and every one that was stung with a fiery serpent, was healed by looking up to that serpent of brass. The people proved that God would take away the serpent from them, *ver. 6.* but God saw fit not to do that; for he gives effectual relief in the best way, though not in our way. Thus those who did not die for their murmuring, yet were made to smart for it, that they might the more feelingly repent and humble themselves for it; they were likewise made to receive their cure from God by the hand of Moses, that they might be taught, if possible, never again to speak against God and Moses.

This method of cure was altogether miraculous, and the more wonderful if it be true which naturalists say, that looking upon bright and burnished brass, is hurtful to those that are stung with fiery serpents. God can bring about his purposes by contrary means. The Jews themselves say, it was not the sight of the brazen serpent that cured them, but in looking up to it, they looked up to God as the Lord that healed them. But there was much of gospel in this appointment. Our Saviour has told us so, *John iii. 15.* *That as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish.* Observe then a resemblance, (1.) Between their disease and ours. The devil is the old serpent, a fiery serpent; hence he appears, *Rev. xii. 3.* as a great red dragon: Sin is the biting of this fiery serpent, it is painful to the startled conscience, and poisonous to the feared conscience. Satan's temptations are called his *fiery darts*, *Eph. vi. 16.* Lust and passion inflame the soul, so do the terrors of the Almighty, when they set themselves in array. At the last, sin bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder; and even its sweets are turned into the gall of asps. (2.) Between their remedy and ours. 1. It was God himself that devised and prescribed this antidote against the poison of the fiery serpents; so our salvation by Christ was the contrivance of infinite wisdom. God himself hath found the ransom. 2. It was a very unlikely method of cure; so our salvation by the death of Christ is to the Jews a *stumbling-block*; and to the Greeks *foolishness*. It was Moses that lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the law is a school-master to bring us to Christ, and Moses wrote of him, *John v. 46.* Christ was lifted up by the rulers of the Jews, who were the successors of Moses. 3. That which cured was shaped in the likeness of that which wounded. So Christ, though perfectly free from sin himself, yet was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, *Rom. viii. 3.* So like, that it was taken for granted, *this man was a sinner*, *John ix. 24.* 4. The brazen serpent was lifted; so was Christ; He was lifted upon the cross; *John xii. 33, 34.* for he was made a spectacle to the world. He was lifted up by the preaching of the gospel. The word here used for a pole, signifies a banner or ensign, for Christ crucified stands for an ensign of the people, *Isa. xi. 10.* Some make the lifting up of the serpent to be a figure of Christ's triumphing over Satan, the old serpent, whose head he bruised, and in his cross made an open shew of the principalities and powers he had spoiled and destroyed, *Col. ii. 15.* (3.) Between the application of their remedy and ours. They looked and lived, and we, if we believe, shall not perish; it is by faith that we look unto Jesus, *Heb. xii. 2.* Look unto me, and be ye saved, *Isa. xlv. 22.* We must be sensible of our wound, and of our danger by it, receive the record God has given concerning his Son, and rely upon the assurance he has given us that we shall be healed and saved by him, if we resign ourselves to his conduct. The brazen serpents being lifted up would not cure, if it were not looked upon. If any pored on their wound, and would not look up to the brazen serpent, they died for certain. If they slighted this method of cure, and had recourse to natural medicines, and trusted to them, they justly perished; so, if sinners either despise Christ's righteousness, or despair of benefit by it, their wound will, without doubt, be fatal; but whoever looked up to this healing sign, though from the outmost part of the camp, though with a weak and weeping eye, was certainly healed; so whosoever believes in Christ, though as yet but weak in faith, shall not perish. There are weak brethren, for whom Christ died. Perhaps for some time after the serpent was set up, the camp of Israel was molested by the fiery serpents; and it is the probable conjecture of some, that they carried this brazen serpent along with them through the rest of their journeys, and set it up wherever they encamped, and when they settled in Canaan, fixed it somewhere within the borders of their land, for it is not likely that the children of Israel went so far off as this was in the wilderness to burn incense to it, as we find they did, *2 Kings xviii. 4.* Even those that are delivered from the eternal death which is the wages of sin, yet must expect to feel the pain and smart of it, as long as they are here in this world, but if it be not our own fault, we may have the brazen serpent to accompany us, to be still looked up to upon all occasions, by bearing about with us continually the dying of the Lord Jesus.

10. ¶ And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in Obboth. 11. And they journeyed from Obboth, and pitched at Ije-abarim, in the wilderness which is before Moab, toward the sun-rising. 12. ¶ From thence they removed, and pitched in the valley of Zared. 13. From thence they removed and pitched on the other side of Arnon, which is in the wilderness that cometh out of the coasts of the Amorites; for Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites. 14. Wherefore it is said in the book of the Wars of the LORD, What he did in the Red-sea, and in the brooks of Arnon, 15. And at the stream of the brooks that goeth down to the dwelling of Ar, and lieth upon the borders of Moab. 16. And from thence they went to Beer; that is the well whereof the LORD spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water. 17. ¶ Then Israel sang this song, Sprink up, O well; sing ye unto it; 18. The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it by the direction of the law-giver, with their staves. And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah; 19. And from Mattanah to Nahaliel; and from Nahaliel to Bamoth. 20. And from Bamoth in the valley that is in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah, which looketh towards Jeshimon.

We have here an account of the several stages and removes of the children of Israel, till they came into the plains of Moab, out of which at length they passed over Jordan into Canaan, in the beginning of Joshua. Natural motions the nearer they come to their center, the quicker they are. Israel was now drawing near to the promised rest. And now they set forward, as the expression is, *ver. 10.* It were well if we would do thus in our way to heaven, rid ground in the latter end of our journey, and the nearer we come to heaven, be so much the more effective and abundant in the work of the Lord. Two things especially are observable in the brief account here given of these removes.

1. The wonderful success which God blessed his people with near the brooks of Arnon, *ver. 13, 14, 15.* They had now compassed the land of Edom, which they were not to invade, nor so much as to infect, *Deut. ii. 4, 5.* and were come to the borders of Moab. It is well there are more ways

ways than one to Canaan. The enemies of God's people may retard the passage, but cannot prevent their entrance into the promised rest. Care is taken to let us know, that the Israelites in their march religiously observed the orders God gave them, to use no hostility against the Moabites, *Deut. ii. 9.* because they were the posterity of righteous Lot; therefore they pitched on the other side of Arnon, *ver. 13.* that side which was now in the possession of the Amorites, one of the devoted nations, though formerly it had belonged to Moab, as appears here, *ver. 26, 27.* This care of theirs not to offer violence to the Moabites was pleaded by Jephtha long after, in his remonstrance against the Ammonites, *Judg. xi. 15, &c.* and turned to them for a testimony. What their achievements were now they pitched on the banks of the river Arnon, we are not particularly told; but are referred to the *book of the wars of the Lord*; perhaps that book which was begun with the history of the war with the Amalekites, *Exod. xvii. 14.* Write it (saith God) for a memorial on a book; to which were added, all the other battles Israel fought, in order; and among the rest, their actions upon the river Arnon, at Vahed in Suphah, as our margin reads it, and other places on that river. Or it shall be said (so some read it) in the rehearsal, or commemoration of the wars of the Lord, what he did in the Red sea, when he brought Israel out of Egypt, and what he did in the brooks of Arnon, just before he brought them into Canaan. Note, In celebrating the memorials of God's favours to us, it is good to observe the series of them, and how divine goodness and mercy hath constantly followed us, even from the Red sea to the brooks of Arnon. In every stage of our lives, nay in every step we should take notice of what God has wrought for us, what he did at such a time, and what in such a place, ought to be distinctly remembered. 2. The wonderful supply which God blessed his people with at Beer, *ver. 16.* which signifies the well or fountain. It is said, *ver. 10.* they pitched in Oboth, which signifies bottles, so called perhaps because they filled their bottles with water, which should last them for some time; but by this time, we may suppose, it was with them as it was with Hagar, *Gen. xxi. 15.* The water was spent in the bottle; yet we do not find that they murmured, and therefore God, in compassion to them, brought them to a well of water to encourage them to wait on him in humble silence and expectation, and to believe that he would graciously take cognizance of their wants, though they did not complain of them. In this world we do at the best but pitch in Oboth, where our comforts lie in close and scanty vessels; when we come to heaven, we shall remove to Beer, the well of life, and fountain of living waters. Hitherto we have found, when they were supplied with water, they asked it in unjust discontent, and God gave it in just displeasure; but here we find, 1. That God gave it in love, *ver. 16.* Gather the people together, to be witness of the wonder, and joint sharers in the favour, and I will give them water. Before they prayed, God granted and prevented them with the blessings of his goodness. 2. That they received it with joy and thankfulness, which made the mercy doubly sweet to them, *ver. 17.* Then they sang this song, to the glory of God, and the encouragement of one another, *Spring up, O well*; thus they pray it may spring up, for promised mercies must be fetched in by prayer; they triumph that it may spring up, and meet it with their joyful acclamations; with joy must we draw out water out of the wells of salvation, *Isa. xii. 3.* As the brazen serpent was a figure of Christ, who is lifted up for our cure, so is this well a figure of the spirit, who is poured forth for our comfort, and from him flow to us rivers of living waters, *John vii. 38.* Doth this well spring up in our souls, We should sing to it; take the comfort to ourselves, and give the glory to God; stir up this gift, sing to it, *Spring up, O well, thou fountain of gardens, to water my soul, Cant. iv. 15.* Plead the promise, which perhaps alludes to this story, *Isa. xli. 17, 18.* I will make the wilderness wells of water. 3. That whereas before the remembrance of the miracle was perpetuated in the names given to the places, which signified the people's strife and murmuring, now was it perpetuated in a song of praise, which preserved on record the manner how it was done, *ver. 18.* The princes digged the well, the seventeen elders, it is probable, by direction of the lawgiver, i. e. Moses, under God, with their slaves; that is, with their slaves they made holes in the soft and sandy ground; and God caused the water miraculously to spring up in the holes they made. Thus the pious Israelites long after, passing through the valley of Baca, a dry and thirsty place, made wells, and God by rain from heaven filled the pools, *Psal. lxxxiv. 6.* Observe, (1.) God promised to give them water, but they must open the ground to receive it, and give it vent. God's favours must be expected in the use of such means as lie within our power, but still the excellency of the power is of God. 2. The nobles of Israel were forward to set their hands to this work, and use their slaves, probably those that were the ensigns of their honour and power, for the public service, and it is upon record to their honour. And we may suppose it was a great confirmation to them in their offices, and a great comfort to the people that they were made use of by the divine power, as instruments in this miraculous supply. By this it appeared, that the spirit of Moses, who must shortly die, rested in some measure upon the nobles of Israel. Moses did not strike the ground himself, as formerly the rock, but gave them direction to do it, that their slaves might share in the honour of his rod, and they might comfortably hope, that when he should leave them, yet God would not, but that they also in their generation should be public blessings, and might expect the divine preference with them, as long as they acted by direction of the law-giver. For comfort must be looked for only in the way of duty; and if we should share in divine joys, we must carefully follow the divine conduct.

21. ¶ And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, 22. Let me pass through thy land; we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well; but we will go along by the king's high-way, until we be past thy borders. 23. And Sihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his border: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel into the wilderness: and he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel. 24. And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon: for the border of the children of Ammon was strong. 25. And Israel took all these cities: and Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites in Heshbon, and in all the villages thereof. 26. For Heshbon was the city of Sihon the king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and taken all his land out of his hand, even unto Arnon. 27. Wherefore they that

speak in proverbs, say, Come into Heshbon, let the city of Sihon be built and prepared. 28. For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon: it hath consumed Ar of Moab, and the lords of the high places of Arnon. 29. Woe to thee, Moab! thou art undone, O people of Chemosh: he hath given his sons that escaped, and his daughters, into captivity unto Sihon king of the Amorites. 30. We have shot at them; Heshbon is perished even unto Dibon, and we have laid them waste even unto Nophah, which reacheth unto Medeba. 31. ¶ Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites. 32. And Moses sent to spy out Jaazar, and they took the villages thereof, and drove out the Amorites that were there. 33. ¶ And they turned and went up by the way of Bashan: and Og the king of Bashan went out against them, he, and all his people, to the battle at Edrei. 34. And the LORD said unto Moses, Fear him not: for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land; and thou shalt do to him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon. 35. So they smote him and his sons, and all his people, until there was none left him alive: and they possessed his land.

We have here an account of the victories Israel obtained over Sihon and Og, which must be distinctly considered, not only because they are here distinctly related, but because long after the memorial of them is distinctly celebrated, and they are severally assigned as instances of everlasting mercy; he slew Sihon king of the Amorites, for his mercy endureth for ever; and Og the king of Bashan, for his mercy endureth for ever, *Psal. cxxxvi. 19, 20.*

1. Israel sent a peaceable message to Sihon king of the Amorites, *ver. 12.* but received an unpeaceable return, worse than that of the Edomites to the like message, *chap. xx. 18—20.* For the Edomites only refused them passage, and stood upon their own defence to keep them out; but Sihon went out with his forces against Israel in the wilderness, out of his own borders, without any provocation given him, *ver. 23.* and so run himself upon his own ruin. Jephtha saith, he was prompted by his politics to do this, *Judg. xi. 20.* Sihon trusted not Israel to pass through his coast, but his politics deceived him, for Moses saith, God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into the hand of Israel, *Deut. ii. 30.* The enemies of God's Church are often infatuated into those very counsels, which they think most wisely taken. Sihon's army was routed, and not only so, but all his country came into the possession of Israel, *ver. 24, 25.*

This seizure is justified, 1. Against the Amorites themselves, for they were the aggressors and provoked the Israelites to battle; and yet perhaps that would not have been sufficient to entitle Israel to their land, but that God himself, the King of nations, and the Lord of the whole earth, had given them a grant of it. The Amorite was one of the devoted nations, whose land God had promised to Abraham and his seed, which promise should be performed, when the iniquity of the Amorites should be full, *Gen. xv. 16.* Jephtha insists upon this grant as their title, *Judg. xi. 23, 24.* The victory God gave them over the Amorites, put them in possession, and then the promise made to their fathers having given them a right, by virtue of that they kept possession. 2. Against the Moabites, who had formerly been the Lord's proprietors of this country, if they should ever lay claim to it, and should plead, that God himself had provided that none of the land should be given to Israel for possession, *Deut. ii. 9.* Moses here furnishes posterity with a replication to their plea, and Jephtha makes use of it against the Amorites two hundred and sixty years after, when Israel's title to this country was questioned. (1.) The justification itself is, that though it is true, this country had belonged to the Moabites, yet the Amorites had taken it from them some time before, and were now in full and quiet possession of it, *ver. 26.* The Israelites did not take it out of the hands of the Moabites, they had before lost it to the Amorites, and were constrained to give up their pretensions to it; and when Israel had taken it from the Amorites, they were under no obligation to restore it to the Moabites, whose title to it was long since distinguished. See here the uncertainty of worldly possessions, how often they change their owners, and how soon we may be deprived of them, even when we think ourselves most sure of them; they make themselves wings. It is our wisdom therefore to secure the good part, which cannot be taken away from us. See also the wisdom of the divine providence and its perfect foresight, by which, preparation is made long before, for the accomplishment of all God's purposes in their season. This country being designed in due time for Israel, it is beforehand put into the hand of the Amorites, who little think that they have it but as trustees, till Israel comes of age and then must surrender it. We understand the vast reaches of providence, but known unto God are all his works, as appears in this instance, that he set the bounds of the people, according to the number of the children of Israel, *Deut. xxxii. 8.* All that land which he intended for his chosen people, he put into the possessions of the devoted nations, that were to be driven out. 2. For proof of the allegation, he refers to the authentic records of their country, for so their proverbs, or songs were, one of which he quotes some passages out of, *ver. 27—30.* which sufficiently proves what it is vouched for, viz. 1. That such and such places are here named, though they had been in the possession of the Moabites, were by right of war, become the dominion of Sihon king of the Amorites. Heshbon is become his city, and he obtained such a quiet possession of it, that it was built and prepared for him, *ver. 27.* and the country to Dibon and Nophah, was likewise subdued, and annexed to the kingdom of the Amorites, *ver. 30.* 2. That the Moabites were utterly disabled ever to regain the possession. Even Ar of Moab, though not taken or attempted by Sihon, but still remaining the metropolis of Moab, yet was so wasted by this loss, that it would never be able to make head, *ver. 28.* The Moabites were undone, and even Chemosh their God had given them up, as unable to rescue them out of the hands of Sihon, *ver. 29.* By all this it appears, that the Moabites claim to this country was barred for ever. There may be a farther reason for inserting the Amorite poem, viz. to shew, That the triumphing of the wicked is short. They that had conquered the Moabites, and insulted over them, are now themselves conquered and insulted over by the Israel of God. It is very probable, that the same Sihon king of the Amorites, that had got this country from the Moabites, now lost it to the Israelites: for though it be said to be taken from a former king of Moab, *ver. 26.* yet not by a former king of the Amorites; and then

then it shews how sometimes justice makes men to see the loss of that which they got by violence, and were puffed up with the gain of. They are *exalted but for a little while*, Job xxiv. 24.

2. Og, king of Bashan, instead of being warned by the fate of his neighbours, to make peace with Israel, is alarmed by it to make war upon them, which proves in like manner to be his destruction. Og was also an Amorite, and therefore, perhaps, thought himself better able to deal with Israel than his neighbours were, and more likely to prevail, because of his own gigantic strength and stature, which Moses takes notice of, *Deut. iii. 11.* where he gives a more full account of this story. Here observe, 1. That the Amorites begin the war, *ver. 33.* He went out to the battle against Israel. His country was very rich and pleasant, Bashan was famous for the best timber, witness the oaks of Bashan, and the best breed of cattle, witness the bulls and kine of Bashan, and the lambs and rams of that country, which are celebrated, *Deut. xxxii. 14.* Wicked men do their utmost to secure themselves and their possessions against the judgments of God, but all in vain, when their day comes to fall. 2. That God interests himself in the cause, bids Israel not to fear this threatening force, promiseth a complete victory, *I have delivered him into thy hand*, *ver. 34.* the thing is as good as done already, it is all thine own, enter and take possession. Giants are but worms before God's power. 3. That Israel is more than a conqueror, not only routs the enemies army, but gains the enemies country, which afterwards was part of the inheritance of the two tribes and a half, that were first seated on the other side Jordan. God gave Israel these successes, while Moses was yet with them, both for his comfort, that he might see the beginning of that glorious work, which he must not live to see the finishing of; and for the encouragement of the people, in the war of Canaan under Joshua. Though this was to them in comparison but as the day of small things, yet it was an earnest of great things.

C H A P. XXII.

At this chapter begins the famous story of Balak and Balaam, their attempt to curse Israel, and the baffling of that attempt; God's people are long after bid to remember what Balak the king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, that they might know the righteousness of the Lord, Mic. vi. 5. In this chapter we have, 1. Balak's fear of Israel, and the plot he had to get them cursed, ver. 1—4. 2. The embassy he sent to Balaam, a conjurer, to fetch him for that purpose, and the disappointment he met with in that first embassy, ver. 5—14. 3. Balaam's coming to him upon his second message, ver. 15—21. 4. The opposition Balaam met with by the way, ver. 22—35. 5. The interview at length between Balak and Balaam, ver. 36—41.

1. **A**ND the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab, on this side Jordan by Jericho. 2. ¶ And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. 3. And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many; and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel. 4. And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time. 5. He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor, to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me. 6. Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people, for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land; for I wot that he whom thou blestest, is blessed, and he whom thou curstest, is cursed. 7. And the elders of Moab, and the elders of Midian departed, with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak. 8. And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again as the LORD shall speak unto me; And the princes of Moab abode with Balaam. 9. And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee? 10. And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, saying, 11. Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth; Come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out. 12. And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them, thou shalt not curse the people for they are blessed. 13. And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land; for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you. 14. And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us.

The children of Israel have at length finished their wanderings in the wilderness, out of which they went up, *chap. xxi. 18.* and are now encamped in the plains of Moab near Jordan, where they continued till they passed through Jordan under Joshua, after the death of Moses. Now here we have, 1. The mighty fright that the Moabites were in upon the approach of Israel, *ver. 2, 3, 4.* They needed not to fear any harm from them, if they knew (and it is probable Moses let them know) the orders God had given Israel, not to contend with the Moabites, nor to use any hostility against them, *Deut. ii. 9.* But if they had any notice of this, they were jealous that it was but sham, to make them secure, that they

might be the easier conquered. Notwithstanding the old friendship between Abraham and Lot, the Moabites resolved to ruin Israel if they could, and therefore they will take it for granted, without any ground for the suspicion, that Israel resolves to ruin them. Thus it is common for those that design mischief, to pretend that mischief is designed against them; and their groundless jealousies must be the colour of their causeless malice. They hear of their triumphs over the Amorites, *ver. 2.* and think their own house is in danger, when their neighbour's is on fire. They observe their multitudes, *ver. 3.* They were many; and hence infer how easily they would conquer their country, and all about them, if some speedy and effectual course were not taken to stop the progress of their victorious arms; they shall lick up, or devour us, and all that are round about us, as speedy and irresistibly as the ox eats up the grass, *ver. 4.* owning himself to be an unequal match for so formidable an enemy. Therefore they were sore afraid and distressed themselves; thus were the wicked in great fear where no fear was, *Psal. liii. 5.* These fears they communicated to their neighbours, the elders of Midian, that some measures might be concerted between them for their common safety; for if the kingdom of Moab fall, the republic of Midian cannot stand long. The Moabites if they had pleased might have made a good use of the advances of Israel, and their successes against the Amorites; they had reason to rejoice, and give God and Israel thanks for freeing them from the threatening power of Sihon, king of the Amorites; who had taken from them part of their country, and was likely to over-run the rest. They had reason likewise to have courted Israel's friendship, and to have come into their assistance; but having forsaken the religion of their father Lot, and being sunk into idolatry, they hated the people of the God of Abraham, and were justly infatuated in their counsels, and given up to distress. 2. The project the king of Moab had, to get the people of Israel cursed, *i. e.* to set God against them, who, he perceived, hitherto fought for them. He trusted more to his arts than to his arms, and had a notion, that if he could but get some prophet or other, with his powerful charms, to imprecate evil upon them, and to pronounce a blessing upon himself and his forces, that then, though otherwise too weak, yet he should be able to deal with them. This notion arose, (1.) Out of the remains of some religion, for it owns a dependence upon some invisible sovereign powers that rule in the affairs of the children of men, and determine them, and an obligation upon us to make application to these powers. (2.) Out of the ruins of the true religion; for if the Midianites and Moabites had not wretchedly degenerated from the faith and worship of their pious ancestors, Abraham and Lot; they could not have imagined it possible with their curses, to do any prejudice to a people, who alone adhered to the service of the true God, from whose service they had revolted. 3. The court he made to Balaam the son of Beor, a famous conjurer, to engage him to curse Israel. This Balaam lived a great way off in that country from whence Abraham came, and where Laban lived; but though it is probable, there were many nearer home, that were pretenders to divination, yet none that had so great a reputation for success as Balaam, and Balak will employ the best he can hear of, though he send a great way for him, so much is his heart upon this project. And to gain him, (1.) He makes him his friend; complaining to him, as his confident, of the danger he was in from the numbers and neighbourhood of the camp of Israel, *ver. 5.* They cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me. (2.) In effect, he makes him his God, by the great power he attributes to his word, *he whom thou blestest, is blessed, and he whom thou curstest, is cursed*, *ver. 6.* The learned Bishop Patrick inclines to think, with many of the Jewish writers, that Balaam had been a great prophet, who, for the accomplishment of his predictions, and the answers of his prayers, both for good and evil, hath been looked upon justly as a man of great interest with God; but growing proud and covetous, God departed from him, and then to support his sinking credit, he betook himself to diabolical arts. He is called a prophet, *2 Pet. ii. 16.* because he had been one, or, perhaps, he had raised his reputation from the first by his magical charms, as Simon Magus, who bewitched the people so far, that he was called, *The great power of God*, *Acts viii. 10.* Curses pronounced by God's prophets in the name of the Lord, have wonderful effects, as Noah's *Gen. ix. 25.* Elisha's, *2 Kings ii. 24.* But the curse *causeless shall not come*, *Prov. xxvi. 2.* No more than Goliath's, when he *curst David by his gods*, *1 Sam. xvii. 43.* Let us desire to have the prayers of God's ministers and people for us, and dread having them against us, for they are greatly regarded by him who blesteth indeed, and curseth indeed. But Balak cannot rely upon these compliments as sufficient to prevail with Balaam, the main inducement is yet behind, *ver. 7.* they took the rewards of divination in their hand; the wages of unrighteousness, which he loved, *1 Pet. ii. 15—24.* The restraint God lays upon Balaam, forbidding him to curse Israel. It is very likely, Balaam, being a curious inquisitive man, was no stranger to Israel's case and character, but had heard that God was with them of a truth; so that he ought to have given these messengers their answer immediately, that he would never curse a people whom God had blessed; but he lodges the messengers, and takes a night's time to consider what he should do, and receive instructions from God, *ver. 8.* When we enter into a parley with temptations, we are in great danger of being overcome by them. In the night God comes to him, probably in a dream, enquires what business those strangers had with him; He knows it, but he will know it from him. Balaam give him an account of their errand, *ver. 9, 10, 11.* And God thereupon chargeth him not to go with them, nor attempt to curse that blessed people, *ver. 12.* Thus God sometimes, for the preservation of his people, was pleased to speak to bad men, as to Abimelech, *Gen. xx. 3.* and to Laban, *Gen. xxxi. 24.* And we read of some that were workers of iniquity, and yet in Christ's name prophesied, and did many wondrous works. Balaam is charged not only not to go to Balak, but not to offer to curse this people, which he might have attempted at a distance; and the reason is, given, *they are blessed.* This was part of the blessing of Abraham, *Gen. xii. 3.* I will curse him that curseth thee. So that an attempt to curse them, would be not only fruitless but perilous. Israel had often provoked God in the wilderness, yet he will not suffer their enemies to curse them, for he rewards them not according to their iniquities. The blessedness of those whose sin is covered cometh upon them, *Rom. iv. 6, 7.* 5. The return of the messengers without Balaam.

1. Balaam is not faithful in returning God's answer to the messengers, *ver. 13.* He only tells them, *The Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you*; he doth not tell them, as he ought to have done, that Israel was a blessed people, and must by no means be cursed, for then the design had been crushed, and the temptation had not been renewed; but he doth, in effect, desire them to give his humble service to Balak, and let him know, that he applauded his project, and would have been very glad to gratify him, but truly he has the character of a prophet, and must not go without leave from God, which he has not yet obtained, and therefore for the present he must be excused. Note, Those are a fair mark for Satan's temptations, that speak diminishingly of divine prohibitions, as if they amounted to no more than a denial of a permission, and as if to go against God's law, were only to go without his leave. 2. The messengers are not faithful in returning Balaam's answer to Balak; all the account they give of it is, *Balaam refuseth*

refused to come with us, ver. 14. intimating, that he only wanted more courtship, and higher proffers; but they are willing Balak should know that God had signified his disallowance of the attempt. Thus are great men wretchedly abused by the flatteries of those about them, who do all they can to prevent their seeing their own faults and follies.

15. ¶ And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they. 16. And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak, the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: 17. For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: Come, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people. 18. And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more. 19. Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more. 20. And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do. 21. And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

We have here a second embassy sent Balaam, to fetch him over to curse Israel. It were well for us, if we would be as earnest and constant in prosecuting a good work, notwithstanding disappointments, as Balak was in pursuing this ill design. The enemies of the church are restless and unwearied in their attempts against it; but he that sits in heaven laughs at them. Observe, 1. The temptation Balak laid before Balaam; he contrived to make this assault more vigorous than the former. It is very probable, he sent double money in the hands of his messengers, but besides that, now he tempted him with honours; laid a bait not only for his covetousness, but for his pride and ambition. How earnestly should we beg of God daily to mortify in us these two limbs of the old man. Those that know how to look with a holy contempt upon worldly wealth and preferment, will find it not so hard a matter, as most men do, to keep a good conscience. See how artfully Balak managed the temptation. 1. The messengers he sent were *more, and more honourable*, ver. 15. He sent to this conjuror with as great respect and deference to his quality, as if he had been a sovereign prince; apprehending, perhaps, that Balaam had thought himself slighted in the fewness and meanness of the former messengers. 2. The request was very urgent; this powerful prince becomes a suitor to him; *Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee*, ver. 16. No not God, or conscience, or any fear either of sin or shame. 3. The proffers were high; *I will promote thee to very great honour among the princes of Moab*, nay, he gives him a blank, and he shall write his own terms, *I will do whatsoever thou sayest*, i. e. I will give thee whatever thou desirest, and observe whatever thou orderest; thy word shall be a law to me, ver. 17. Thus sinners stick at no pains, spare no cost, and care not how low they stoop for the gratifying either of their luxury, or of their malice; shall we then be stiff and strait-handed in our compliance with the laws of virtue; God forbid. 2. Balaam's seeming resistance of, but real yielding to this temptation. We may here discern in Balaam a struggle between his convictions and his corruptions. (1.) His convictions charge him to adhere to the command of God, and he spoke their language, ver. 18. Nor could any man have said better, *If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold*, and that is more than he can give, or I can ask, *I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God*. See how honourably he speaks of God, he is Jehovah, my God: Note, Many call God theirs, that are not his, not truly because not only his, *they swear by the Lord, and by Malcham*. See how respectfully he speaks of the word of God, as one resolved to stick to it, and in nothing to vary from it; and how slightly of the wealth of this world, as if gold and silver were nothing to him in comparison with the favour of God; and yet at the same time, the searcher of hearts knew that he loved the wages of unrighteousness. Note, It is an easy thing for bad men to speak very good words, and to make a shew of piety, from the teeth outward. There is no judging of men by their words, God knows the heart. (2.) His corruptions at the same time strongly inclined him to go contrary to the command. He seemed to refuse the temptation, ver. 18. But even then he expressed no abhorrence of it, as Christ did when he had the kingdoms of the world offered him, *Get thee hence Satan*; And as Peter did when Simon Magus offered him money; *Thy money perish with thee*. But it appears, ver. 19. that he had a great mind to accept the proffer, for he would farther attend to know what God would say to him, hoping he might alter his mind, and give him leave to go. This was a vile reflection upon God Almighty, as if he could change his mind, and now at last, suffer those to be cursed whom he had pronounced blessed; and as if he would be brought to allow of that which he had already declared to be evil. Surely he thought God altogether such a one as himself. He had already been told what the will of God was, in which he ought to have acquiesced, and not to have desired a re-hearing of that cause, which was already so plainly determined. Note, It is a very great affront to God, and a certain evidence of the dominion of corruption in the heart, to beg leave to sin. 3. The permission God gave him to go, ver. 20. God came to him, probably by an angel, and told him he might if he pleased go with Balak's messengers. So he gave him up to his own heart's lust. Since thou hast such a mind to go, even go, yet know that the journey thou undertakest shall not be for thine honour; for though thou hast leave to go, thou shalt not as thou hopest have leave to curse, for the word which I shall say unto thee, that thou shalt do. Note, God hath wicked men in a chain; hitherto they shall come by his permission, but no further than he doth permit them. Thus he makes the wrath of man to praise him, yet at the same time, restrains the remainder of it. It was in anger that God said to Balaam, go with them, and we have reason to think that Balaam himself so understood it, for we do not find him pleading this allowance, when God reproved him for going. Note, As God sometimes denies the prayers of his people in love, to sometimes he grants the desires of the wicked in wrath. 4. His setting out in the journey, ver. 21. God gave him leave to go if the men called him, but he was so fond of the journey, that we do not find he staid for their calling him, but he himself rose up in the morning, got every thing ready with all speed, and went with the princes of Moab, who were proud enough that they had carried their point. The apostle describes Balaam's sin here to be, that he *ran greedily into an error for reward*, Jude 11. The love of money is the root of all evil.

No. XXIV.

22. ¶ And God's anger was kindled because he went; and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him. 23. And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way. 24. But the angel of the LORD stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side. 25. And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again. 26. And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand, or to the left. 27. And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. 28. And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? 29. And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee. 30. And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay. 31. Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand; and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face. 32. And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times; behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me; 33. And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times; unless, she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive. 34. And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me; now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again. 35. And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, go with the men; but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

We have here an account of the opposition God gave to Balaam in his journey towards Moab; probably the princes were gone before, or gone some other way, and Balaam had appointed where he would meet them, or where they should stay for him, for we read nothing of them in this encounter: only that Balaam, like a person of some quality, was attended with his two men; honour enough one would think for such a man, he needed not be beholden to Balak for promotion. 1. Here is God's displeasure against Balaam for undertaking this journey. *God's anger was kindled because he went*, ver. 22. Note, 1. The sin of sinners is not to be thought the less provoking to God for his permitting it. We must not think that, because God doth not by his providence restrain men from sin, therefore he approves of it, or that it is therefore not hateful to him; he suffers sin and yet is angry at it. 2. Nothing is more displeasing to God than malicious designs against his people; he that touches them, touches the apple of his eye. 2. The way God took to let Balaam know his displeasure against him. *An angel stood in the way for an adversary*. Now God fulfilled his promise to Israel, *Exod. xxiii. 22. I will be an enemy to thine enemies*. The holy angels are adversaries to sin, and perhaps are employed more than we are aware of in preventing it, particularly in opposing those that have any ill design against God's church and people, for whom Michael our prince stands up, *Dan. xii. 1, 19, 21*. What a comfort is this to all that with well to the Israel of God, that he never suffers wicked men to form any attempt against them, but he sends his holy angels forth to break this attempt, and secure his little ones. When the prophet saw the four horns that scattered Judah, at the same time he saw four carpenters that were to fray these horns, *Sech. i. 18*. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him. This angel was an adversary to Balaam, because Balaam counted him his adversary, otherwise those are really our best friends, and we are to reckon them that stop our progress in a sinful way. The angel stood with his sword drawn, ver. 23. A flaming sword, like that in the hands of the cherub, *Gen. iii. 24. Turning every way*. Note, The holy angels are at war with those with whom God is angry, for they are ministers of his justice.

Balaam has notice given him of God's displeasure, 1. By the ass, and that did not startle him. The ass saw the angel, ver. 23. How vainly did Balaam boast that he was a man whose eyes were open, and that he saw the vision of the Almighty, chap. xxiv. 3, 4. when the ass he rode on, saw more than he did, his eyes being blinded with covetousness and ambition, and dazzled with the rewards of divination. Note, Many have God against them, and his holy angels, but are not aware of it. The ass knows his owner, sees his danger, but Balaam doth not know, doth not consider, *Isa. i. e. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up they will not see*. Let none be puffed up with a conceit of visions and revelations, when even an ass saw an angel; yet let those be ashamed of their own sottishness, worse than that of the beasts that perish, who when they are told of the sword of God's wrath drawn against them, while they persist in wicked ways, yet will go on; the ass understood the law of self preservation better than so, for to save both herself and her senseless rider, (1.) She turned aside out of the way, ver. 23. Balaam should have taken the hint of this, and considered whether he were not out of the way of his duty, but instead of that he beat her into the way again. Thus they who by wilful sin are running head long into perdition, are angry at those that would prevent their ruin. (2.) She had not gone much further; but she sees the angel again, and then to avoid him runs up to a wall, and crushes her rider's foot, ver. 24, 25. How many ill acci-

dents we are liable to, in travelling upon the road, from which if we are preserved, we must own our obligations, to the divine providence, which by the ministry of angels, keeps us in all our ways, lest we dash our foot against a stone; but if we at any time meet with a disaster, it should put us upon enquiry, whether our way be right in the sight of God or no? The crushing of Balaam's foot, though it was the saving of his life, yet provoked him so much that he smote his ass the second time. So angry are we apt to be at that which though a present uneasiness, yet is a real kindness. (3.) Upon the next encounter with the angel, the ass fell down under Balaam, ver. 26. 27. He ought to have considered, that there was certainly something extraordinary in this, for his ass was not resty, nor did she use to serve him thus, but it is common for those whose hearts are fully set in them to do evil, to push on violently, and break through all the difficulties which providence lays in their way to give check to them, and to stop them in their career. Balaam the third time smote his ass, though she had now done him the best piece of service that ever she did him, saving him from the sword of the angel, and by her falling down, teaching him to do likewise. (4.) When all this would not work upon him, God opened the mouth of the ass, and she spoke to him once and again; and yet neither did this move him, ver. 28. The Lord opened the mouth of the ass. This was a great miracle, quite above the power of nature, and wrought by the power of the God of nature; who made man's mouth, and taught him to speak, for otherwise (since we learn to speak purely by imitation, and therefore they that are born deaf are consequently dumb) the first man had never spoke, nor any of his seed. He that made man speak, could, when he pleased, make the ass to speak with man's voice, 2 Pet. ii. 16. Here Mr. Ainsworth observes, that the devil when he tempted our first parents to sin, did it by a subtle serpent: But God when he would convince Balaam, did it by a silly ass, a creature dull and foolish to a proverb; for Satan corrupts men's minds by the craftiness of those that lie in wait to deceive, but Christ has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. By a dumb ass God rebukes the madness of the prophet, for he will never want reprovers, but when he pleases can make the stones to cry out as witnesses to him, Luke xix. 40. Hab. ii. 11. 1. The ass complained of Balaam's cruelty, ver. 28. What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me? Note, The righteous God will not see the meanest and weakest abused; but either they shall be enabled to speak in their own defence, or he will some way or other speak for them. If God would not suffer a beast to be wronged, much less a man, a christian, a child of his own. We cannot open the mouth of the dumb, as God did here, but we may and must open our mouth for the dumb, Prov. xxxi. 8. Job xxxi. 13. The ass's complaint was just, What have I done? Note, Those we smite with hand or tongue, we should consider what they have done unto us, and what provocation they have given us. We hear it not, but thus the whole creation groans being burdened, Rom. viii. 22.

It was much that Balaam was not astonished to hear his ass speak, and put to confusion; but some think being a conjuror, it was no new thing to him to be thus spoken to by his familiars; others rather think, that his brutish head-strong passion so blinded him, that he could not observe or consider the strangeness of the thing. Nothing befots men worse than unbridled anger doth. Balaam in his fury wisheth he hath a sword to kill his ass with, ver. 29. See his impotency; can he think by his curses to do mischief to Israel, that has it not in his power to kill his own ass? This he cannot do, yet he fain would; and what would he get by that, but make himself so much the poorer (as many do) to gratify his passion and revenge; such was the madness of this false prophet. Here Bishop Hall observes, it is ill falling into the hands of those, whom the brute creatures find unmerciful, for a good man regardeth the life of his beast. The ass reasoned with him, ver. 30. God enabled not only a dumb creature to speak, but a dull creature to speak to the purpose. Three things she argues with him from, (1.) His property in her; Am not I thine ass? Note, 1. God has given to man a dominion over the creatures: They are delivered into his hand to be used, and put under his feet to be ruled. 2. Even wicked people have a title to the possessions God gives to them, which they are not to be wronged of. 3. The dominion God has given us over the creatures, is a good reason why we should not abuse them. We are the lords, and therefore must not be tyrants. (2.) Her serviceableness to him,—On which thou hast ridden. Note, It is good for us often to consider how useful the inferior creatures are and have been to us, that we may be thankful to God, and tender of them. (3.) That she was not wont to do so by him, and never before crushed his foot, or fallen down under him; he might therefore conclude there was something more than ordinary that made her do so now: Note, 1. The seldomness of an offence should moderate our displeasure against an offender. 2. When the creatures depart from their wonted obedience to us, we should enquire the cause within ourselves, and be humbled for our sin. 2. Balaam at length hath notice of God's displeasure, by the angel, and that did startle him. When God opened his eyes he saw the angel, ver. 31. and then he himself fell flat upon his face, in reverence of that glorious messenger, and in fear of the sword he saw in his hand. God has many ways of breaking and bringing down the hard and unhumiliated heart. 1. The angel reproved him for his outrageousness, ver. 32, 33. Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass? Whether we consider it or no, it is certain God will call us to account for the abuses done to his creatures. Nay, he shews him, how much more reason he had to smite upon his breast, and to condemn himself, than to fly out thus against his ass; thy way is perverse before me, and then how canst thou expect to prosper? And how much wiser his ass was than he himself, and how much beholden he was to her that she turned aside; it was for his safety, and not for her own, for had she gone on, he had been slain, and she had been saved alive. Note, When our eyes are opened, we shall see what danger we are in, in a sinful way; and how much it was for our advantage to be crossed in it, and what fools we were to quarrel with our crosses which helped to save our lives. 2. Balaam then seemed to relent, ver. 34. I have sinned; sinned in undertaking this journey, sinned in pushing on so violently; but he excuses it with this, that he saw not the angel, but now he did see him he was willing to go back again. That which was displeasing to God was not so much his going, as his going with a malicious design against Israel, and a secret hope, that notwithstanding the proviso with which his permission was clogged, he might prevail to curse them, and so gratify Balak, and get preferment under him. Now this wickedness of his heart it doth not appear that he is sensible of, or willing to own, but if he find he cannot go forward, he will be content (since there is no remedy) to go back. Here is no sign that his heart is turned, but if his hands be tied, he cannot help it. Thus many leave their sins, only because their sins have left them. There seems to be a reformation of the life, but what will that avail if there be no renovation of the heart? 3. The angel however continued his permission, ver. 35. Go with the men. Go, if thou hast a mind to be made a fool of, and to be shamed before Balak, and all the princes of Moab; Go, but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak, whether thou wilt or no. For this seems not to be a precept, but a prediction of the event, that he should not only not be able to curse Israel, but he should be forced to bless them; which would be more for the glory of God, and his own confusion, than if he had turned back. Thus God gave him fair

warning, but he would not take it, he went with the princes of Balak. For the iniquity of Balaam's covetousness God was wrath and smote him, but he went on frowardly, Isa. lvii. 17.

36. ¶ And when Balak heard that Balaam was come, he went out to meet him unto a city of Moab, which is in the border of Arnon, which is in the utmost coast. 37. And Balak said unto Balaam, Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee? Wherefore camest thou not unto me? Am I not able indeed to promote thee to honour? 38. And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say any thing? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak. 39. And Balaam went with Balak, and they came unto Kirjath-Huzoth. 40. And Balak offered oxen and sheep, and sent to Balaam, and to the princes that were with him. 41. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost part of the people.

We have here the meeting between Balak and Balaam, confederate enemies to God's Israel, but here they seem to differ in their expectations of the success.

1. Balak speaks of it with confidence, not doubting but to gain his point now Balaam was come. In expectation of this he went out to meet him, even to the utmost border of his country, ver. 36. partly to gratify his own impatient desire to see one he had such great expectations from, and partly to do honour to Balaam, and so to engage him with his utmost power to serve him. See what respect heathen princes paid to those that had but the name and face of prophets, and pretended to have any interest in heaven; and how welcome one was that came with his mouth full of curses. What a shame is it then, that the ambassadors of Christ are so little respected by most, so much despised by some, and that they are so coldly entertained, who bring tidings of peace and a blessing! Balak has now nothing to complain of, but that Balaam did not come sooner, ver. 37. And he thinks he should have considered both the importunity Balak had used, Did I not earnestly send to thee? (and the importunity of lesser people than kings has prevailed with many against their inclinations) and that he should also have considered Balak's intentions concerning him; Am not I able to promote thee to honour? Balak, as king, was in his own kingdom the fountain of honour, and Balaam should have his choice of all the preferments that were in his gift; he therefore thinks himself affronted by Balaam's delays, which looked as if he thought the honours he prepared not worthy his acceptance. Note, Promotion to honour is a very tempting bait to many people; and it were well if we would be drawn into the service of God by the honour he sets before us. Why do we delay to come unto him? Is not he able to promote us to honour? 2. Balaam speaks doubtfully of the issue, and bids Balak not depend too much upon him, ver. 38. Have I now any power at all to say any thing? I am come, but what the nearer am I? Gladly would I curse Israel; but I must not, I cannot, God will not suffer me. He seems to speak with vexation at the hook in his nose, and the bridle in his jaws, such as Sennacherib was tied up with, Isa. xxxvii. 29. 3. They address themselves with all speed to the business. Balaam is nobly entertained over night, a sacrifice of thanksgiving is offered to the gods of Moab, for the safe arrival of this welcome guest, and he is treated with a feast upon the sacrifice, ver. 40. And the next morning, that no time might be lost, Balak takes Balaam in his chariot to the high places of his kingdom, not only because their holiness, (such as it was) he thought, might give some advantage to his divinations, but their height might give him a convenient prospect of the camp of Israel, which was to be the butt or mark at which he must shoot his envenomed arrows. And now Balaam is really as solicitous to please Balak, as ever he had pretended to be to please God. See what need we have to pray every day, Our father in heaven, lead us not into temptation.

C H A P. XXIII.

In this chapter we have Balak and Balaam busy at work to do Israel a mischief, and for ought appears, neither Moses nor the elders of Israel know any thing of the matter, nor are in a capacity to break the snare, but God, who keeps Israel, and neither slumbers nor sleeps, baffles the attempt, without any intercession or contrivance of theirs. Here is, 1. The first attempt to curse Israel. (1.) The preparation made for it by sacrifice, ver. 1—3. (2.) The contrary instruction God gave Balaam, ver. 4, 5. (3.) The blessing Balaam was compelled to pronounce upon Israel instead of a curse, ver. 7—10. (4.) The great disappointment Balak was hereby put under, ver. 11, 12. 2. The second attempt in the same manner made, and in the same manner balked, ver. 13—26. 3. Preparations made for a third attempt, ver. 27—30. the issue of which we have in the next chapter.

1. **A**ND Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams. 2. And Balak did as Balaam had spoken; and Balak and Balaam offered on every altar a bullock and a ram. 3. And Balaam said unto Balak, Stand by thy burnt-offering, and I will go: peradventure the LORD will come to meet me; and whatsoever he sheweth me, I will tell thee. And he went to an high place. 4. And God met Balaam; and he said unto him, I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram. 5. And the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak. 6. And he returned unto him, and, lo, he stood by his burnt-sacrifice, he, and all the princes of Moab. 7. And he took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab, hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me, Jacob, and come defy Israel. 8.

How

How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the LORD hath not defied? 9. For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. 10. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his. 11. And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and behold thou hast blessed them altogether. 12. And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the LORD hath put in my mouth.

Here is, 1. Great preparation made for the cursing of Israel. That which was aimed at was to engage the God of Israel to forsake them, and either to be on Moab's side, or to stand neuter. O the foolishness of superstition, to imagine that God will be at men's beck! Balaam and Balak think to bribe him with altars and sacrifices, offered without any warrant or institution of his; as if he would eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats. Ridiculous nonsense, to think that these would please God and gain his favour, when there could be in them no exercise either of faith or obedience. Yet it should seem, they offered these sacrifices to the God of Heaven, the supreme Numen, and not to any of their local deities. But the multiplying of altars was an instance of their degeneracy from the religion of their ancestors, and their apostasy to idolatry, for they that multiplied altars, multiplied gods; *Ephraim made many altars to sin*, Hos. viii. 11. *Thus they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, but became vain in their imaginations*; and yet presumptuously expected hereby to gain God over to their from Israel, who had his sanctuary among them, and his anointed altar.

Observe here, (1.) How very imperious Balaam was, proud to have the command of a king, and to give law to princes. Such is the spirit of that wicked one who exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; with what authority doth Balaam give orders, *build me here* (in the place I have pitched upon) *seven altars of stone or turf*. Thus he covers his malice against Israel with a shew of devotion, but his sacrifice was an abomination, being brought with such a wicked mind, Prov. xxi. 27. That which he aimed at was not to honour God with the sacrifices of righteousness, but to enrich himself with the wages of unrighteousness. (2.) How very obsequious Balak was. The altars were presently built, and the sacrifices prepared, the best of the sort, *seven bullocks and seven rams*. Balak sticks not at the charge, nor doth he shrug at it, or think it either a weariness or a disparagement to stand by his burnt-offering as Balaam ordered him.

2. The turning of the curse into a blessing, by the over-ruling power of God, in love to Israel; which is the account Moses gives of it, Deut. xxiii. 5.

1. God puts the blessing into the mouth of Balaam. While the sacrifices were burning Balaam retired, he went solitary into some dark grove on the top of the high place, ver. 3. marg. Thus much he knew, that solitude gives a good opportunity for communion with God; those that would meet with him must retire from the world, and the business and conversation of it, and love to be private, reckoning themselves never less alone than when alone, because the Father is with them. Enter therefore into thy closet, and shut the door, and be assured God will meet thee, if thou seek him in the due order: but Balaam retired with a peradventure only, having some thoughts that God might meet him, but being conscious to himself of guilt, and knowing that God had lately met him in anger, he had reason to speak doubtfully, ver. 3. *Peradventure the Lord will come to meet me. But let not such a man think that he shall receive any favour from God*. Nay it should seem, though he pretended to go meet with God, he really designed to use enchantments, see chap. xxiv. 1. But whatever he intended, God designed to serve his own glory by him, and therefore met Balaam, ver. 4. *What communion has light with darkness? No friendly communion we may be sure; Balaam's way was still perverse, and God was still an adversary to him; but Balak having chosen him for his oracle, God would constrain him to utter such a confession to the honour of God and Israel, as should render those for ever inexcusable, who should appear in arms against them*. When Balaam was aware that God met him, probably by an angel, he boasted of his performances, *I have prepared seven altars, and offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram*. How had he done it? It cost him nothing, it was done at Balak's expense; yet, (1.) He brags of it, as if he had done a mighty thing. The acts of devotion which are done in hypocrisy, are commonly reflected upon with pride and vain-glory. Thus the Pharisee went up to the temple to boast of his religion, Luke xviii. 12. (2.) He insists upon it as a reason why God should gratify him in his desire to curse Israel, as if now he had made God his debtor, and might draw upon him for what he pleased. He thinks God is so much beholden to him for these sacrifices, that the least he can do in recompence for them, is to sacrifice his Israel to the malice of the king of Moab. Note, It is a common cheat that wicked people put upon themselves to think, that by the shews of piety they may prevail with God to countenance them, and connive at them in their greatest immoralities, especially in persecution, Isa. lxvi. 5. However, though the sacrifice was an abomination, God took the occasion of Balaam's expectation, to put a word into his mouth, ver. 5. *for the answer of the tongue is from the Lord*; and thus he would shew how much they are mistaken, who say, *With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are our own*, Psal. xiii. 4. He that made man's mouth knows how to manage it, and to serve his own purposes by it. This speaks terror to daring sinners, that set their mouth against the heavens. God can make their own tongues to fall upon themselves, Psal. lxiv. 8. And it speaks comfort to God's witnesses, whom at any time he calls out to appear for him; if God put a word into the mouth of Balaam, who would have defied God and Israel; surely he will not be wanting to those who desire to glorify God, and edify his people by their testimony; but it shall be given them in that same hour what they should speak. 2. Balaam pronounced the blessing in the ears of Balak. He found him standing by his burnt-sacrifice, ver. 6. closely attending it, and earnestly expecting the success. Those that would have an answer of peace from God, must abide by the sacrifice, and attend on the Lord without distraction, not weary in well-doing. Balaam having fixed himself in the place appointed for his denouncing curses against Israel, which perhaps he had drawn up in form ready to deliver, takes up his parable, and it proves a blessing, ver. 7. He pronounceth Israel safe and happy, and so blesteth them.

1. He pronounceth them safe, and out of the reach of his envenomed darts. (1.) He owns the design was to curse them; that Balak sent for him out of his own country, and he came with that intent, ver. 7. The mes-

sage sent to him was, *Come curse me Jacob, and come defy Israel*. Balak intended to make war upon them, and he would have Balaam to bless his arms, and to prophecy and pray for the ruin of Israel. (2.) He owns the design defeated, and his own inability to accomplish it. He could not so much as give them an ill word, or an ill wish. *How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?* ver. 8. not that therefore he would not do it, but therefore he could not do it. This is a fair confession. 1. Of the weakness and impotency of his own magic skill, for which others valued him so much, and doubtless he valued himself no less. He was the most celebrated man of that profession, and yet owns himself baffled. God had warned the Israelites not to use divination, Lev. xix. 31. and this providence gave them a reason for that law, by shewing them the weakness and folly of it. As they had seen the magicians of Egypt fooled, so here the great conjuror of the east, See Isa. xlviii. 12, 13, 14. 3. It is a confession of the sovereignty and dominion of the divine power. He owns that he could do no more than God would suffer him to do, for God could over-rule all his purposes, and turn his counsels headlong. 3. It is a confession of the inviolable security of the people of God. Note, 1. God's Israel are owned and blessed of him. He has not cursed them, for they are delivered from the curse of the law, he has not defied them, nor rejected or abandoned them, though mean and vile. 2. Those that have the good-will of Heaven have the ill-will of Hell: the serpent and his seed have an enmity to them. 3. Though the enemies of God's people may prevail far against them, yet they cannot curse them; that is, they cannot do them any real mischief, much less a ruining mischief, for they cannot separate them from the love of God, Rom. viii. ult. 2. He pronounceth them happy—in three things. 1. Happy in their peculiarity, and distinction from the rest of the nations, ver. 9. *From the top of the rocks I see him*. And it seems to have been a mighty surprize to him, that whereas (it is probable) they were represented to him as a rude and disorderly rabble, that infested the countries round about in rambling parties; he saw them a regular incorporated camp, in which appeared all the marks of discipline and good order; he saw them a peopled dwelling alone, and foresaw they would continue so, and their singularity would be their unspeakable honour. Persons of quality we call persons of distinction, this was Israel's praise, though their enemies turned it to their reproach, that they differed from all the neighbour nations, not only in their religion and sacred rites, but in their diet and dress, and common usages, as a people called out of the world, and not to be conformed to it. They never lost their reputation till they mingled themselves among the heathen, Psal. cvi. 35. Note, It is the duty and honour of those that are dedicated to God, to be separated from the world, and not to walk according to the course and custom of it. Those who make conscience of peculiar duties, may take the comfort of peculiar privileges, which it is likely Balaam has an eye to here; God's Israel shall not stand upon a level with other nations, but be dignified above them all, as a people near to God, and set apart for him. 2. Happy in their numbers; not so few and despicable as they were represented to him, but an innumerable company, which made them both honourable and formidable, ver. 10. *Who can count the dust of Jacob?* The number of the people was the thing that Balaam was vexed at, chap. xxii. 3. *Moab was afraid of them because they were many*; and God doth here by Balaam increase that fear and vexation, foretelling their further increase. Balak would have him see the utmost part of the people, chap. xxii. 4.1. hoping the more he saw of them, the more he would be exasperated against them, and throw about his curses with the more keenness and rage, but it proved quite contrary, instead of being angry at their numbers, he admired them. The better acquainted we are with God's people, the better opinion we have of them. He takes notice of the number, (1.) Of the dust of Jacob, i. e. the people of Jacob, concerning whom it was foretold that they should be as the dust for number, Gen. xxviii. 14. Thus he owns the fulfilling of the promise made to the fathers, and expects that it should be yet further accomplished. Perhaps it was part of David's fault in numbering the people, that he offered to count the dust of Jacob, which God had said should be innumerable. (2.) Of the fourth part of Israel; alluding to the form of their camp, which was cast into four squadrons, under four standards. Note, God's Israel is a very great body, his spiritual Israel is so, and they will appear to be so, when they shall all be gathered together unto him in the great day, Rev. vii. 9. 3. *Happy in their last end. Let me die the death of the righteous Israelites*, that are in covenant with God, and let my last end, or future state, be like theirs, or my recompence, viz. in the other world. Here, 1. It is taken for granted, that death is the end of all men; the righteous themselves must die, and it is good for each of us to think of this with application, as Balaam himself doth here, speaking of his own death. 2. He goes upon the supposition of the soul's immortality, and a different state on the other side death, to which this is a noble testimony, and an evidence of its being anciently known and believed. For how could the death of the righteous be more desirable than the death of the wicked upon any other account, but that of a happiness in another world, since in the manner and circumstances of dying we see all things come alike to all? 3. He pronounceth the righteous truly blessed, not only while they live, but when they die; which makes their death not only more desirable than the death of others, but even more desirable than life itself; for in that sense his wish may be taken, not only when I do die, let me die the death of the righteous, but I could even now be willing to die, on that condition that I might die the death of the righteous, and take my end this moment, provided it might be like his. Very near the place where Balaam now was, on one of the mountains of Moab, not long after this Moses died, and to that perhaps God that put this word into his mouth, designed it should have a reference; that by it Moses might be encouraged to go up and die such a death, as Balaam himself wished to have died. 4. He shews his opinion of religion to be better than his resolution; there are many who desire to die the death of the righteous, but do not endeavour to live the life of the righteous; gladly would they have their end like theirs, but not their way. They would be saints in heaven but not saints on earth. This is the desire of the slothful, which kills him because his hands refuse to labour. This of Balaam's is only a wish, not a prayer, and it is a vain wish, being only a wish of the end, without any care of the means. Thus far this blessing goes, even to death and beyond it, as far as the last end. Now we are told, ver. 11, 12.

1. How Balak fretted at it, ver. 11. He pretended to honour the Lord with his sacrifices, and to wait for the answer God would send him, and yet when it did not prove according to his mind, he forgot God, and flew out in a great passion against Balaam, as if it had been purely his doing, *What hast thou done unto me? how hast thou disappointed me?* Sometimes God makes the enemies of his church a vexation one to another, while he that sits in heaven laughs at them and the efforts of their impotent malice. 2. How Balaam was forced to acquiesce in it. He submits, because he cannot help it, and yet humours the thing well enough, as if he had been mighty conscientious, answering Balak with the gravity of a prophet, *Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord has put in my mouth?* ver. 12. Thus a confession of God's over-ruling power, is extorted from a wicked prophet, to the further confusion of a wicked prince.

13. And Balak said unto him, Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them: thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shalt not see them all: and curse me them from thence, 14. ¶ And he brought him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar. 15. And he said unto Balak, Stand here by thy burnt-offering, while I meet the LORD yonder. 16. And the LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Go again unto Balak, and say thus. 17. And when he came to him, behold, he stood by his burnt-offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said unto him, What hath the LORD spoken? 18. And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak; and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor: 19. God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? 20. Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. 21. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. 22. God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. 23. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel; according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought! 24. Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down, until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain. 25. ¶ And Balak said unto Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all. 26. But Balaam answered and said unto Balak, Told I not thee saying, All that the LORD speaketh, that I must do? 27. ¶ And Balak said unto Balaam, Come, I pray thee, I will bring thee unto another place; peradventure it will please God, that thou mayest curse me them from thence. 28. And Balak brought Balaam unto the top of Peor, that looketh towards Jeshimon. 29. And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks, and seven rams. 30. And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar.

Here is, 1. Preparation made the second time as before for the cursing of Israel. (1.) The place is changed, ver. 13. Balak fancied that Balaam having so full a prospect of the whole camp of Israel, from the top of the rocks, ver. 9. he was either enamoured with the beauty of it, that he would not curse them, or so affrighted with the terror of it, that he durst not, and therefore he would bring him to another place, from which he might see only some part of them, which would appear more despicable, and that part at least, which would lie in view, he hoped he might obtain leave to curse, and so by degrees he should get ground against them; intending, no doubt, if he had gained this point, to make his attack on that part of the camp of Israel, which Balaam now had in his eye, and into which he was to throw the fire-balls of his curses. See how restless and unwearied the Church's enemies are in their malicious attempts to ruin it; they leave no stone unturned, no project untried to compass it. O that we were as full of contrivance and resolution in prosecuting good designs for the glory of God! (2.) The sacrifices are repeated, new altars are built, a bullock, and a ram offered on every altar, and Balak attends his sacrifice as closely as ever, ver. 14, 15. Were we thus earnest to obtain the blessing, as Balak was to procure a curse, (designedly upon Israel, but really upon himself and his people) we would not stick at the return both of the charge and of the labour of religious exercises. (3.) Balaam renews his attendance on God, and God meets him the second time, and puts another word into his mouth, not to reverse the former, but to ratify it, ver. 16, 17. If God said not to Balaam, *seek in vain*, much less will he say so to any of the seed of Jacob, who shall surely find him not only as Balaam, their instructor and oracle, but their bountiful rewarder. When Balaam returned, Balak was impatient to know what message he had, *What hath the Lord spoken?* Is there any better tidings yet, any hopes of speeding? This should be our enquiry when we come to hear the word of God. See Jer. xxiii. 35. 2. A second conversion of the curse into a blessing by the over-ruling power of God; and this blessing is both larger, and stronger than the former, and quite cuts off all hopes of altering it. Balak having been so forward to ask what the Lord had spoken, ver. 17. Balaam now addresseth himself particularly to him, ver. 18. *Rise up, Balak, and hear.* It was a message from God he had to deliver, and it is required of Balak, though a king, (1.) That he attend, hear, and hearken, with a close application of the mind, let not a word slip. (2.) That he attend with reverence, *Rise up and hear.* His successor Eglon, when he was to receive a message from God, *rose out of his seat*, Judg. iii. 20.

Two things Balaam in this discourse informs Balak of, sorely to his grief and disappointment. 1. That he had no reason to hope he should ruin Israel; it would be to no purpose to attempt it, and he would deceive himself if he expected it; for two reasons. 1. Because God is unchangeable, ver. 19. *God is not a man that he should lie.* Men change their minds, and therefore break their words; they lie, because they repent. But God doth neither. He never changes his mind, and therefore never recalls his promise. Balaam had owned, ver. 8. That he could not alter God's counsels, and from thence he infers here, that God himself would not alter it; such is the imperfection of man, and such the perfection of God. It is impossible for God to lie, Heb. vi. 18. And when in scripture he is said to repent, it is not meant of any change of his mind, for he is in one mind, and who can turn him! but only of the change of his way. This is a great truth, that with God there is no variability or shadow of turning: Now here, 1. He appeals to Balak himself concerning it: *Hath he said, and shall he not do it?* said it

in his own purpose, and shall he not perform it in his providence, according to the counsel of his will? Hath he spoken in his word, in his promise, and shall he not make it good? Can we think otherwise of God, but that he is unchangeably one with himself, and true to his word? All his decrees are unalterable, and all his promises inviolable. 2. He applies this general truth to the case in hand, ver. 20. "He hath blessed and I cannot reverse it," i. e. I cannot prevail with him to reverse it. Israel was of old a blessed people, a seed that the Lord had blessed, the blessing of Abraham came upon them; they were born under the blessing of the covenant, and born to the blessing of Canaan, and therefore they could not be cursed, unless you could suppose, that the God of eternal truth should break his word, and become false to himself and his people. 2. Because Israel is at present unblameable, ver. 32. *He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob.* Not but that there was iniquity in Jacob, and God saw it; but, 1. There was not such a degree of iniquity as might provoke God to abandon them, and give them up to ruin. As bad as they were, they were not so bad. 2. There was no idolatry among them, which is in a particular manner called iniquity, and perverseness; we have found nothing of that kind in Israel since the golden calf, and therefore though they were in other instances very provoking, yet God would not cast them off. Balaam knew that nothing would separate between them and God but sin; while God saw no reigning sin among them; he would send no destroying curse among them; and therefore as long as they kept in with God, he despaired of ever doing them any mischief. Note, While we keep from sin, we keep from harm. Some gave another sense of these words: they read it thus: *He has not beheld wrong offered to Jacob, nor will he see any grievance done to Israel*, i. e. he hath not, nor will he permit, or allow it; he will not see Israel injured, but he will right them, and avenge their quarrel. Note, God will not bear to see any injury done to his Church and people; for what is done against them, he takes as done against himself, and will reckon for it accordingly. 2. Because the power of both was irresistible. He shews Balak there was no dealing with them, it was to no purpose to offer it; for, 1. They had the presence of God with him. *The Lord his God is with him*, in a particular manner, and not provoked to withdraw from him. 2. They had the joy of that presence, and were always made to triumph in it; *the shout or alarm of a king is among them*. They shout against their enemies, as sure of victory and success, glorifying continually in God as their king and conqueror for them. 3. They had had the experience of the benefit of God's presence with them, and his power engaged for them. For God brought them out of Egypt, ver. 22. The power that had done that could never be restrained, never resisted; and having begun so gloriously, would no doubt finish gloriously. 4. While they had God's presence with them, they had the strength of an unicorn, able to make head against all that opposed them. See chap. xxiv. 8. Such is the strength which the God of Israel gives unto his people.

Now from all this he infers, that it was to no purpose for him to think of doing them a mischief by all the arts he could use, ver. 22. 1. He owns himself baffled. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, so as to prevail. The curses of hell can never take place against the blessings of heaven. Not but that attempts of this kind would be made, but they would certainly be fruitless and ineffectual. Some observe, that Jacob speaks the Church low and afflicted, Israel speaks it prosperous and advanced; but be the Church high or low, be her friends few or many, do second causes smile or frown, it comes all to one. No weapon formed against it shall prosper. Note, God easily can, and certainly will, baffle and disappoint all the devices and designs of the powers of darkness against his Church, so that they shall not prevail to destroy it. 2. He foresees that this would be remembered in time to come. According to this time, i. e. with reverence to this we are now about, it shall be said concerning Jacob and Israel, and said by them, *What hath God wrought!* What great things hath God done for his people? It shall be said with wonder, joy, and thankfulness, and a challenge to the neighbour-nations, to produce any like instances of the care of their gods for them. Note, The defeating of the designs of the Church's enemies, ought to be had in everlasting remembrance to the glory of God. *There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun.* What Balaam saith here concerning the pre-eminence of the God of Israel, above all the gods of the Gentiles, perhaps Moses refers to, when he saith, *Deut. xxxii. 31. Their rock is not as our rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.* Balaam particularly. Balak therefore has no hopes of ruining Israel; but, 2. Balaam shews him, that he had more reason to fear being ruined by them, for they were likely to make bloody work among his neighbours; and if he and his country escaped, it was not because he was too big for them to meddle with, but because he fell not within their commission, ver. 24. Behold and tremble, the people that now have lain for some time closely encamped, do but repose themselves for a while like a lion couchant, but shortly they shall rise up as a great lion, a lion rampant, that shall not lie down till he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain. This seems to point at the victories he foresaw they would obtain over the Canaanites; that they would never lay down their arms, till they had made a complete conquest of the land they had now in view: and when his neighbour's house was on fire, he had reason to think his own in danger.

Now what was the issue of this disappointment! 1. Balak and Balaam were both of them sick of the cause. 1. Balak is now willing to have his conjuror silenced. Since he cannot say what he would have him, he wishes him to say nothing. *Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all*, ver. 25. If thou canst not curse them, prithee do not bless them. If thou canst not assist and encourage my forces, yet do not oppose and discourage them. Note, God can make those that depart from him weary of the multitude of their counsels, Isa. xlviii. 13.—lvii. 10. 2. Balaam is still willing to own himself over-ruled, and appeals to what he had said in the beginning of this enterprise, chap. xxii. 38. *All that the Lord speaketh, that I must do*, ver. 26. This shews, (1.) In general, that the way of man is not in himself; there are many devices in man's heart, but God's counsels shall stand. (2.) In particular, that as no weapon formed against the Church shall prosper, so every tongue that riseth against her in judgment, God will control and condemn, Isa. liv. 17. 2. Yet they resolve to make another attempt. They think iticorn to be baffled, and therefore pursue the design, though it be only to their further confusion. And now the third time, 1. They change the place. Balak is at last convinced that it is not Balaam's fault, on whom before he had laid the blame, but that really he was under a divine check, and therefore now he hopes to bring him to a place, from whence God might at least permit him to curse them, ver. 27. Probably, he and Balaam were the more encouraged thus to repeat their attempt, because God had the second time allowed Balaam to go, though he had forbidden him the first time; because by repeated trials they had carried that point, they hope in like manner to carry this. Thus because sinners are connived at, and sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily, their hearts are the more fully set in them to do evil. The place he now took him to was the top of Peor; the most eminent high place in all his country, where, it is probable, Baal was worshipped, and was thence called Baal-peor. He chose this place in hopes; either (1.) That it being the residence (as he fancied) of Baal, the god of Moab, Jehovah the God of Israel would not, or could not come hither to hinder the operation; or, (2.) That it being a place

place acceptable to his god, it would be so to the Lord, and there he would be brought into a good humour. Such idle conceits have foolish men of God, and so vain are their imaginations concerning him. Thus the Syrian fancied the Lord to be God of the hills, but not of the vallies, 1 Kings xx. 28. as if he were more powerful in one place, than he is in every place. 3. They repeat their sacrifices, seven bullocks, and seven rams, upon seven altars, ver. 29, 30. Thus do they persevere in their expensive oblations, though they had no promise on which to build their hopes of speeding. Let not us therefore who have a promise, that the vision at the end shall speak and not lie, be discouraged by delays, but continue instant in prayer, and not faint, Luke xviii. 1.

C H A P. XXIV.

This chapter continues and concludes the history of the defeat of the counsels of Balak and Balaam against Israel, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts; and as great an instance it is of God's power over the children of men, and his favour towards his own children, as any of the victories recorded in the book of the wars of the Lord. What preparation was made the third time, for the cursing of Israel, we read of in the close of the foregoing chapter. In this chapter we are told, 1. What the blessing was into which that intended curse was turned, ver. 1—9. 2. How Balak dismissed Balaam from his service thereupon, ver. 10—13. 3. The predictions Balaam left behind him concerning Israel, and some of the neighbour-nations, ver. 14—25.

1. **AND** when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he went not as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness. 2. And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents, according to their tribes: and the Spirit of God came upon him. 3. And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open, hath said: 4. He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open. 5. How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! 6. As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river side, as the trees of lign-aloes which the LORD hath planted, and as cedar-trees, beside the waters. 7. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his feed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. 8. God brought him forth out of Egypt, he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. 9. He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion, who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blessed thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.

The blessing itself which Balaam here pronounceth upon Israel, is much the same with the two we had in the foregoing chapter, but the introduction to it is different. 1. The method of proceeding here varies much in several instances. 1. Balaam laid aside the enchantments, he had hitherto depended on; used no spells, or charms, or magic arts, finding they did him no service; it was to no purpose to deal with the devil for a curse when it was plain, God was determined immovably to bless, ver. 1. Sooner or later God will convince men of their folly, in seeking after lying vanities which cannot profit. To what purpose should he seek for enchantments, he knew God was out of the reach of them. 2. He did not now retire into a solitary place, as before, but set his face directly towards the wilderness where Israel lay encamped; and since there is no remedy but they must be blessed, he will design nothing else, but will submit by compulsion. 3. Now the Spirit of God came upon him, viz. the Spirit of prophecy, as upon Saul to prevent him from taking David, 1 Sam. xix. 23. He spake not his own sense, but the language of the spirit that came upon him. 4. He used a different preface now from what he had used before, ver. 3, 4. much like that of David's, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1, 2, 3. yet favouring very much (as some think) of pride, and vain glory, taking all the praise of this prophecy to himself, and magnifying himself as one of the cabinet-counsel of Heaven. Two things he boasts of, 1. The favour God did him in making known himself to him. He heard the words of God, and saw the vision of the Almighty; God himself had met him, and spoken to him, chap. xxiii. 16. and this he is hugely puffed up with. Paul speaks with humility of his visions and revelations (2 Cor. xii. 1.) But Balaam speaks of them with pride. 2. His own power to receive and bear those revelations. He fell into a trance indeed, as other prophets did, but he had his eyes open. This he mentions twice; but the words in the original are not the same. The man whose eyes were shut, some think they may read it so, ver. 3. but now having his eyes open, ver. 4. when he had attempted to curse Israel, he owns himself in a mistake, but now he began to see his error; and yet he still remained blinded by covetousness and ambition, those foolish and hurtful lusts. Note, 1. Those that oppose God and his people, will sooner or later be made to see themselves wretchedly deceived. 2. Many have their eyes open that have not their hearts open; are enlightened, but not sanctified; and that knowledge which puffs men up with pride, will but serve to light him to hell, whither many go with their eyes open. 3. Yet the blessing is for substance the same with those before. Several things he admires in Israel. 1. Their beauty, ver. 5. How goodly are their tents, O Jacob! Though they dwelt not in stately palaces, but in coarse and homely tents, and those no doubt sadly weather-beaten, yet Balaam sees a beauty in those tents, because of their admirable order, according to their tribes, ver. 2. Nothing recommends religion more to the good opinion of those that look upon it at a distance, than the unity and harmony of its professors. Psa. cxxxiii. 1. The amiableness of this people, and the great reputation they should win among their neighbours, is compared (ver. 6.) to the beauty and sweetness of fruitful valleys, and fine gardens, flourishing trees, and fragrant spices. Note, Those whose eyes are open, see the saints on the No. XXIV.

earth to be excellent ones, and their delight is accordingly in them. The righteous doubtless is more excellent than his neighbours. They are the trees the Lord has planted, that is their excellency. The branches of righteousness are the planting of the Lord. See Hos. xiv. 5, 6, 7. 2. Their settlements and increase. This may be intended by those similitudes, ver. 6. of the valleys, gardens, and trees, as well as by those expressions, ver. 7. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, i. e. God shall water them with his blessing like rain from heaven, and then his feed shall be in many waters: compare Hos. ii. 23. I will sow her unto me in the earth. And waters are in scripture put for peoples, multitudes, and nations. This has been fulfilled in the wonderful increase of that nation, and their vast multitude even in their dispersion. 3. Their honour and advancement. As the multitude of the people is the honour of the prince, so the magnificence of the prince is the honour of the people; Balaam therefore foretels that his king shall be higher than Agag. Agag, it is probable, was the most potent monarch in those parts; Balaam knew of none more considerable than he, he topped the rest of his neighbours, but Balaam foretels that Israel's chief commander, who, after Moses, was Joshua, should be more great and honourable than ever Agag was, and make a far better figure in history. Saul, their first king, triumphed over Agag, though, it is said, he came delicately. 4. Their power and victory, ver. 8. (1.) He looks back upon what they had done, or rather, what had been done for them. God brought him forth out of Egypt, this he had spoken of before, chap. xxiii. 22. The wonders that attended their deliverance out of Egypt, contributed more to their honour, and the terror of their adversaries, than any thing else, Josh. ii. 10. He that brought them out of Egypt, will not fail to bring them into Canaan, for, as for God, his work is perfect. (2.) He looks down upon their present strength. Israel hath, as it were, the strength of an unicorn; of which creature it is said, Job xxxix. 9, 10. Will he be willing to serve thee, or abide thy crib, canst thou bind him with his band in the furrow? No, Israel is too powerful to be checked or held in by curses, or thy armies. (3.) He looks forward to their future conquests. He shall eat up the nations their enemies, i. e. He shall not only destroy and devour them as easily and irresistibly as a lion doth his prey, but he shall himself be strengthened, and fattened, and enriched by their spoils. 5. Their courage and security, ver. 9. He lay down as a lion, as a great lion. Now he doth so, in the plains of Moab, and asks no leave of the king of Moab, nor is he in fear of him; shortly will he do so in Canaan, when he has torn his prey, he will take his repose, quiet from the fear of evil, and bid defiance to all his neighbours; for who shall stir up a sleeping lion? It is observed of lions, (as the learned Bishop Patrick takes notice here) that they do not retire into places of shelter to sleep, but lie down any where, knowing that none dare meddle with them: thus secure was Israel in Canaan, chiefly in the days of David and Solomon; and thus is the righteous bold as a lion, Prov. xxviii. 1. not to assault others, but to repose themselves, because God maketh them to dwell in safety, Psa. iv. 8. 6. Their interest and influence upon their neighbours. Their friends, and those in alliance with them were happy, blessed is he that blesseth thee; those that do them any kindness, will certainly fare the better for it; but their enemies, and those in arms against them, were certainly miserable, cursed is he that curseth thee: those that do them any injury, it is at their peril; for God takes what is done to them, whether good or evil, as done to himself. Thus he confirms the blessing of Abraham, Gen. xii. 3. and speaks as if therefore he did at this time bless Israel, and not curse them, because he desired to share in the blessing of Israel's friends, and dreaded the curse on Israel's enemies.

10. ¶ And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. 11. Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour, but lo, the LORD hath kept thee back from honour. 12. And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, 13. If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the LORD saith, that will I speak. 14. And now behold, I go unto my people; come therefore, and I will advertise thee, what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.

We have here the conclusion of this vain attempt to curse Israel, and the letting of it fall. 1. Balak made the worst of it. He broke out into a rage against Balaam, ver. 10. expressed both in words and gesture the highest degree of vexation at the disappointment; he smote his hands together for indignation to see all his measures thus broke, and his project baffled. He charged Balaam with putting upon him the basest affront and cheat imaginable; I called thee to curse mine enemies, and thou hast shewed thyself in league with them, and in their interests, for thou hast blessed them these three times; though, by appointing the altars to be built, and the sacrifices to be reared, thou madest me believe thou wouldst certainly curse them. Hereupon he forbid him his presence, expelled him his country, upbraided him with the preferments he had designed to have bestowed upon him, but now would not, ver. 11. The Lord has kept thee back from honour. See what thou gettest by pleasing the Lord, instead of pleasing me; thou hast balked thy preferment by it. Thus they who are any way losers by their duty are commonly upbraided with it, as fools for preferring that before their interest in the world. Whereas if Balaam had been voluntary and sincere in his adherence to the word of the Lord, though he lost the honour Balak designed him by it, God would have made that loss up to him abundantly to his advantage. 2. Balaam made the best of it. (1.) He endeavours to excuse the disappointment. And a very good excuse he has for it, that God restrained him from saying what he would have said, and constrained him to say what he would not; and that this was what Balak ought not to be displeased at, not only because he could not help it, but because he had told Balak before what he must depend upon, ver. 12, 13. Balak could not say that he had cheated him, since he had given him fair notice of the check he found himself under. (2.) He endeavours to atone for it, ver. 14. Though he cannot do what Balak would have him do; yet, (1.) He will gratify his curiosity with some predictions concerning the nations about. It is natural to us to be pleased with prophecy, and with this he hopes to qualify the angry prince. (2.) He will satisfy him with an assurance that whatever this formidable people should do to his people, it should not be till the latter days: so that he, for his part, needed not to fear any mischief or molestation.

molestation from them: the vision was for a great while to come, but in his days there should be peace. (3.) He will put him into a method of doing Israel a mischief without the ceremonies of enchantment and execration. This seems to be implied in that word, *I will advertize thee*; for it properly signifies, *I will counsel thee*: what the counsel was is not set down here, because it was given privately, but we are told afterwards what it was, chap. xxxi. 16. He counselled him to entice the Israelites to idolatry, Rev. ii. 16. Since he could not have leave from God to curse them, he puts them in a way of getting help from the devil to tempt them. *Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo.*

15. ¶ And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open, hath said: 16. He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: 17. I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. 18. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. 19. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city. 20. And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations. but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever. 20. And he looked on the Kenites; and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwelling-place, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock. 22. Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted, until Ashur shall carry thee away captive. 23. And he took up his parable, and said, Alas, who shall live when God doth this! 24. And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Ashur, and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish for ever. 25. And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place; and Balak also went his way.

The office of prophets was both to bless and to prophecy in the name of the Lord. Balaam, as prophet, perforce had blessed Israel, here he foretells future events. 1. His preface is much the same with that, ver. 3, 4. He personates a true prophet admirably well, God permitting and directing him to do so, because whatever he was, the prophecy itself was a true prophecy. He boasts, (1.) That his eyes are open, ver. 15. for prophets were in old time called *Seers*, 1 Sam. ix. 9. because they must speak what they had seen, and therefore before they opened their lips, it was necessary they should have their eyes open. (2.) That he had heard the words of God, which many do that do not heed them, nor hear God in them. (3.) That he knew the knowledge of the most High; this is added here. A man may be full of the knowledge of God, and yet utterly destitute of the grace of God; may receive the truth in the light of it, and yet be a stranger to the love of it. (4.) That he saw the vision of the Almighty, but not so as to be changed into the same image. He calls God the most High, and the Almighty; no man could speak more honourably of him, nor seem to put a greater value upon his acquaintance with him, and yet he had no true fear of him, love to him, or faith in him; so far may a man go towards heaven, and yet come short. 2. Here is his prophecy concerning him that should be the crown and glory of his people Israel; who is (1.) David in the type, who not now, not quickly, but in process of time, should smite the corners of Moab, ver. 17. and take possession of Edom, and mount Seir, and under whom the forces of Israel should do valiantly, ver. 18. This was fulfilled when David smote Moab, and measured them with a line, so that the Moabites became David's servants, 2 Sam. viii. 2. And at the same time the Edomites likewise were brought into obedience to Israel, ver. 14. But, (2.) Our Lord Jesus, the promised Messiah, is chiefly pointed at in the antitype, and of him it is an illustrious prophecy; it was the will of God that notice should thus be given of his coming, a great while before, not only to the people of the Jews, but to other nations, because his gospel and kingdom were to extend themselves so far beyond the borders of the land of Israel. It is here foretold, 1. That his coming should not be yet of a great while; *I shall see him, but not now.* I do see him in vision, but at a very great distance, through the interposing space of fifteen hundred years at least. Or understand it thus; Balaam, a wicked man, shall see Christ, but shall not see him nigh; not see him as Job, who saw him as his redeemer, and saw him for himself, Job xix. 25—27. When he comes in the clouds every eye shall see him, but many will see him (as the rich man in hell saw Abraham) afar off. 2. That he shall come out of Jacob, and Israel, as a star, and a sceptre; the former noting his glory and lustre, as the bright and morning star; the latter his power and authority; it is he that shall have dominion. Perhaps, this prophecy of Balaam (one of the children of the East) concerning a star that should rise out of Jacob, as the indication of a sceptre arising in Israel, being preserved (by tradition of that country, gave occasion to the wise men, who were of the East too, upon the sight of an unusual star over the land of Judea, to inquire for him that was born king of the Jews, Matt. ii. 2. 3. That his kingdom should be universal, and victorious over all opposition: which was typified by David's victories over Moab and Edom. But the Messiah shall destroy, or as some read it, *shall rule over all the children of Seth*, ver. 17. i. e. all the children of men, which descend from Seth, the son of Adam; the descendants of all the rest of Adam's sons being cut off by the deluge. Christ shall be king not only of Jacob and Israel but of all the world; so that all the children of Seth shall be governed by his golden sceptre, or dashed in pieces by his iron rod. He shall set up an universal rule, authority, and power, of his own, and shall put down all opposing rule, 1 Cor. xv. 24. He shall unwall all the children of Seth; so some read it. He shall take down all their defences and carnal confidences, so as that they shall either admit his government to lie open to his judgment. 4. That his Israel shall do valiantly; the subjects of Christ, animated by his might, shall maintain a spiritual war with the powers of darkness, and be more than conquerors. *The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits*, Dan. xi. 32. 3. Here is the prophecy concerning the Amalekites and Kenites, part of whose country it is probable he

had now in view. 1. The Amalekites were now the chief of the nations, ver. 20. therefore Agag was spoken of, ver. 7 as a topping prince, and they were the first that engaged Israel when they came out of Egypt; but the time will come, when that nation, as great as it looks now, will be totally ruined and rooted out. *His latter end shall be, that he perish for ever.* Here Balaam confirms that doom of Amalek which Moses had read, Exod. xvii. 14, 16. where God had sworn that he would have perpetual war with Amalek. Note, Those whom God is at war with, will certainly perish for ever; for when God judgeth, he will overcome. 2. The Kenites were now the securest of the nations; their situation was such, as that nature was their engineer, and had strongly fortified them; *thou puttest thy nest (like the eagle) in a rock*, ver. 21. Thou thinkest thyself safe, and yet the Kenite shall be wasted, ver. 22. and gradually brought to decay, till they be carried captive by the Assyrians, which was done at the captivity of the ten tribes. Note, Bodies politic, like natural bodies, though of the strongest constitution, will gradually decay, and come to ruin at last; even a nest in a rock will be no perpetual security. 4. Here is a prophecy that looks as forward as the Greeks and Romans, for theirs is supposed to be meant by the coast of Chittim, ver. 24. (1.) The introduction to this parable, this article of prophecy is very observable, ver. 23. *Alas! who shall live when God doth this!* Here he acknowledgeth all the revolutions of states and kingdoms to be the Lord's doing, *God doth this*; whoever are the instruments he is the supreme director; but he speaks mournfully concerning them, and hath a very melancholy prospect of the event; *Who shall live?* Either, 1. These events are so distant, and so far off to come, that it is hard to say, *who shall live till they come.* But whoever shall live to see them, there will be amazing turns. Or, 2. They will be so dismal, and make such desolations, that scarce any will escape, or be left alive; who shall live when death rides in triumph? Rev. vi. 8. They that live then will be as brands plucked out of the fire, and will have their lives given them as a prey. God fit us for the worst of times! (2.) The prophecy itself is observable. Both Greece and Italy lie much upon the sea, and therefore their armies were sent forth mostly in ships. Now he seems here to foretel, (1.) That the forces of the Grecians should humble and bring down the Assyrians, who were united with the Persians, which was fulfilled when the eastern country was overcome, or overrun rather, by Alexander. (2.) That theirs and the Roman forces should afflict the Hebrews, or Jews, who were called the children of Eber; this was fulfilled in part when the Grecian empire was oppressive to the Jewish nation, but chiefly when the Roman empire ruined it, and put a period to it. But, (3.) That Chittim, that is, the Roman empire in which the Grecian was at length swallowed, should itself perish for ever, when the stone cut off the mountain without hand, shall consume all these kingdoms, and particularly the feet of iron and clay, Dan. ii. 34. Thus (saith Dr. Lightfoot) Balaam, instead of cursing the Church, curseth Amalek the first, and Rome the last, enemy of the Church. And so let all thy enemies perish, O Lord!

C H A P. XXV.

Israel having escaped the curse of Balaam, here sustains a great deal of damage and reproach by the counsel of Balaam, who, it seems, before he left Balak, put him into a more effectual way than that which Balak thought of, to separate between the Israelites and their God. The Lord will not be prevailed with by Balaam's charms to ruin them; try if they will not be prevailed with by the charms of the daughters of Moab to ruin themselves. None are more fatally bewitched, than those that are bewitched by their own lusts. Here is, 1. The sin of Israel; they were enticed by the daughters of Moab both to whoredom and to idolatry, ver. 1—3. 2. The punishment of this sin by the hand of the magistrate, ver. 4, 5. And by the immediate hand of God, ver. 9. 3. The pious zeal of Phinehas in slaying Zimri and Cozbi, two impudent sinners, ver. 6, 8, 14, 15. 4. God's commendations of the zeal of Phinehas, ver. 1—13. 5. Enmity put between the Israelites and the Midianites their tempters, as at first between the woman and the serpent, ver. 16—18.

1. **A**ND Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. 2. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods: 3. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. 4. And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel. 5. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men, that were joined unto Baal-peor.

Here is, 1. The sin of Israel, to which they were enticed by the daughters of Moab and Midian; they were guilty both of corporeal and spiritual whoredom, for Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor, ver. 3. not all, nor the most, but very many were taken in this snare. Now concerning this, observe, (1.) That Balak, by the advice of Balaam, cast this stumbling-block before the children of Israel, Rev. ii. 14. Note. Those are our worst enemies that draw us to sin, for that is the greatest mischief any man can do us. If Balak had drawn out his armed men against them to fight them, Israel had bravely resisted, and no doubt had been more than conquerors; but now he sends his beautiful women among them, and invites them to his idolatrous feasts, Israel basely yields, and is shamefully overcome: they are smitten, with his whores, that could not be smitten with the sword. Note, We are more in danger by the charms of a smiling world, than by the terrors of a frowning world. (2.) That the daughters of Moab were their tempters, and conquerors. Ever since Eve was first in the transgression, the fairer sex, though the weaker, has been a snare to many; yea strong men have been wounded and slain by the lips of strange women, Prov. vii. 26. witness Solomon, whose wives were snares and nets to him, Eccl. vii. 26. (3.) That whoredom and idolatry went together. They first defiled and debauched their consciences, by committing lewdness with the women, and then were easily drawn, in complaisance to them, and in contempt of the God of Israel, to bow down to their idols. And the more likely to do so, if, as is commonly supposed, and seems probable by the joining of them together, the uncleanness committed was a part of the worship and service performed to Baal-peor. Those that have broke the fences of modesty, will never be held by the bonds of piety; and those that have dishonoured themselves

selves by fleshly lusts, will not stick at dishonouring God by idolatrous worship; and for that are justly given up yet further to vile affections. (4.) That by eating of the idolatrous sacrifices, they joined themselves to Baal-peor, to whom they were offered; which the apostle urgeth as a reason why Christians should not eat things offered to idols, because thereby they had fellowship with the devils to whom they were offered, 1 Cor. x. 20. It is called *eating the sacrifices of the dead*, Psal. cvi. 28. Not only because the idol itself was a dead thing, but because the person represented by it was some great hero, who since his death was deified, as saints in the Roman Church are canonized. (5.) It was a great aggravation of the sin, that *Israel abode in Shittim*, where they had the land of Canaan in view, and were just ready to enter and take possession of it. It was the highest degree of treachery and ingratitude to be false to their God, whom they had found so faithful to them, and to eat of idol-sacrifices, when they were ready to be feasted so richly on God's favours. 2. God's just displeasure against them for this sin. Israel's whoredoms did that which all Balaam's enchantments could not do, they set God against them; now he was turned to be their enemy, and fought against them. So many of the people, nay so many of the princes, were guilty, that the sin became national, and for it God was wroth with the whole congregation.

1. A plague immediately broke out, for we read of the slaying of it, ver. 8. and of the number that died of it, ver. 9. but no mention of the beginning of it, which therefore must be implied in those words, ver. 3. *The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel*. It is said expressly, Psal. cvi. 29. *The plague brake in*. Note, Epidemical diseases are the fruits of God's anger, and the just punishments of epidemical sins; one infection follows the other. The plague, no doubt, fastened on those that were most guilty, who were soon made to pay dear for their forbidden pleasures; and though now God doth not always plague such sinners as he did here, yet that word of God will be fulfilled, *If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy*, 1 Cor. iii. 17. 2. The ring-leaders are ordered to be put to death by the hand of public justice, which will be the only way to stay the plague, ver. 4. *Take the heads of the people*, i. e. of that part of the people, that went out of the camp of Israel into the country of Moab, to join in their idolatries; *Take them and hang them up before the sin*, as sacrifices to God's justice, and for a terror to the rest of the people. The judges must first order them to be slain with the sword, ver. 5. and their dead bodies must be hanged up, that the stupid Israelites, seeing their leaders and princes so severely punished for their whoredom and idolatry, without any regard to their quality, might be possessed with a sense of the evil of the sin, and the terror of God's wrath against them. Ringleaders in sin ought to be made examples of justice.

6. ¶ And behold one of the children of Israel came, and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman, in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 7. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from amongst the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand: 8. And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman through her belly; so the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. 9. And those that died in the plague, were twenty and four thousand. 10. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 11. Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, (while he was zealous for my sake among them) that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. 12. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace. 13. And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel. 11. Now the name of the Israelite that was slain, even that was slain with the Midianitish woman, was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites. 15. And the name of the Midianitish woman that was slain, was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur, he was head over a people, and of a chief house of Midian.

Here is a remarkable contest between wickedness and righteousness, which shall be most bold and resolute; and righteousness carries the day, as no doubt it will at last. 1. Never was vice more daring that it was in Zimri; a prince of a chief house in the tribe of Simeon. Such a degree of impudence in wickedness was he arrived to, that he publicly appeared leading a Midianitish whore (and a whore of quality too like himself, a daughter of a chief house in Midian) in the sight of Moses, and all the good people of Israel. He did not think it enough to go out with his harlot to worship the gods of Moab, but when he had done that, he brought her with him to dishonour the God of Israel. He not only owned her publicly, as his friend, and higher in his favour than any of the daughters of Israel, but openly went with her into the tent, ver. 8. The word signifies, such a booth, or place of retirement, as was designed and fitted up for lewdness. Thus he declared his sin as Sodom, and was so far from blushing for it, that he rather prided himself in it, and gloried in his shame. All the circumstances concurred to make it exceeding sinful, exceeding shameful. (1.) It was an affront to the justice of the nation, and bid defiance to that: the judges were ordered to put the criminals to death, but he thought himself too big for them to meddle with, and, in effect, bids them touch him if they durst. He had certainly cast off all fear of God, who stood in no awe of the powers which he had ordained to be a terror to evil doers. (2.) It was an affront to the religion of the nation, and put a contempt upon that. Moses, and the main body of the congregation, who kept their integrity, were weeping at the door of the tabernacle; lamenting the sin committed, and deprecating the plague begun; they were *sanctifying a fast* in a solemn assembly, weeping between the porch and the altar, to turn away the wrath of God from the congregation; then comes Zimri among them, with his whore in his hand, to banter them, and, in effect, to tell them, that he was resolved to fill the measure of sin, as fast as they emptied it. 2. Never was virtue more daring than it was in Phinehas. Being aware of the insolence of Zimri, which it

is likely all the congregation took notice of, in a holy indignation at the offenders, he riseth up from his prayers, takes his sword or half-pike, follows those impudent sinners into their tent, and stabs them both, ver. 7, 8. It is not at all difficult to justify Phinehas in what he did; for being now heir-apparent to the high-priesthood, no doubt he was one of those judges of Israel, whom Moses had ordered, by the divine appointment, to slay all those whom they knew to have joined themselves to Baal-peor; so that this gives no countenance at all to private persons under pretence of zeal against sin to put offenders to death, who ought to be prosecuted by due course of law. The civil magistrate is the avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil, and no private person may take his work out of his hand.

Two ways God testified his acceptance of the pious zeal of Phinehas. 1. He immediately put a stop to the plague, ver. 8. Their weeping and praying prevailed not, till this piece of necessary justice was done. If magistrates do not take care to punish sin, God will; but their justice will be the best prevention of his judgment, as in the case of Achan, Josh. vii. 13. 2. He put an honour upon Phinehas: though he did no more than was his duty to do as a judge, yet because he did it with extraordinary zeal against sin, and for the honour of God and Israel, and did it when the other judges, out of respect to Zimri's character, as a prince, were afraid, and declined doing it; therefore God shewed himself particularly well pleased with him, and it was counted to him for righteousness, Psal. cvi. 31. There is nothing lost by venturing for God. If Zimri's relations bore him a grudge for it, and his friends might censure him as indiscreet in this violent and hasty execution, what needed he care while God accepted him? In a good thing we should be zealously affected. (1.) Phinehas, upon this occasion, though a young man, is pronounced his country's patriot and best friend, ver. 11. He has turned away my wrath from the children of Israel. So much doth God delight in shewing mercy, that he is well-pleased with those that are instrumental in turning away his wrath; this is the best service we can do to our people; and we may contribute something towards it by our prayers, and by our endeavours in our places, to bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end. (2.) The priesthood is entailed by covenant upon his family: It was designed him before, but now it was confirmed to him, and, which added much to the comfort and honour of it, it was made the recompence of his pious zeal, ver. 12, 13. It is here called an *everlasting priesthood*, because it should continue to the period of the Old Testament dispensation, and should then have its perfection and perpetuity in the unchangeable priesthood of Christ, who is *consecrated for evermore*. By the covenant of peace given him, some understand in general a promise of long life and prosperity and all good; it seems rather to be meant particularly of the covenant of priesthood, for that is called the covenant of life and peace, Mal. ii. 5. and was made for the preserving of peace between God and his people. Observe, How the reward answered the service; by executing justice he had made an atonement for the children of Israel, ver. 13. and therefore he and his shall from henceforward be employed in making atonement by sacrifice. He was zealous for his God, and therefore he shall have the covenant of an everlasting priesthood. Note, It is requisite that ministers should be not only for God, but zealous for God. It is required of them, that they do more than others for the support and advancement of the interests of God's kingdom among men.

16. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 17. Vex the Midianites, and smite them: 18. For they vex you with their wives, wherewith they have beguiled you, in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian their sister, which was slain in the day of the plague, for Peor's sake.

God had punished the Israelites for their sin with a plague, as a father he corrected his own children with a rod, but we read not that any of the Midianites died of the plague; God took another course with them, and punished them with the sword of an enemy, not with the rod of a father. (1.) Moses, though the meekest man, and far from a spirit of revenge, is bid to vex the Midianites, and smite them, ver. 17. Note, We must set ourselves against that, whatever it is, which is an occasion of sin to us, though it be a right eye, or a right hand, that thus offends us, Matth. v. 29, 30. This is that holy indignation and revenge which godly sorrow worketh, 2 Cor. vii. 11. (2.) The reason given for the meditating of this revenge is, because they vex you with their wives, ver. 18. Note, Whatever draws us to sin, should be a vexation to us, as a thorn in the flesh. The mischief which the Midianites did to Israel by enticing them to whoredom, must be remembered and revenged with as much severity, as that which the Amalekites did in fighting with them when they came out of Egypt, Exod. xvii. 14. God will certainly reckon with those that do the devil's work in tempting men to sin, especially those that make Israel to sin. See further orders given in this matter, chap. xxxi. 2.

C H A P. XXVI.

This book is called Numbers, from the numberings of the children of Israel; which it gives an account of. Once they were numbered at mount Sinai, in the first year after they came out of Egypt, which we had an account of, chap. i. and ii. And now a second time they were numbered in the plains of Moab, just before they entered Canaan, and that we have an account of in this chapter. 1. Orders are given for the doing of it, ver. 1—4. 2. A register of the families, and numbers of each tribe, ver. 5—50. and the sum total, ver. 51. 3. Direction given to divide the land among them, ver. 52—56. 4. The families and numbers of the Levites by themselves, ver. 57—62. 5. Notice is taken of the fulfilling of the threatening in the death of all those that were first numbered, ver. 63—65. and to this there seems to have been a special regard in the taking and keeping of this account.

1. AND it came to pass after the plague, that the LORD spake unto Moses, and unto Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saying, 2. Take the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, from twenty years old and upward, throughout their father's house, all that are able to go to war in Israel. 3. And Moses and Eleazar the priest spake with them in the plains of Moab, by Jordan, near Jericho, saying, 4. Take the sum of the people, from twenty years old and upward;

upward; as the LORD commanded Moses and the children of Israel, which went forth out of the land of Egypt.

Observe here, 1. That Moses did not number the people, but when God commanded him. David in his time did it without a command, and paid dear for it. God was Israel's king, and he would not have this act of authority done, but by his express orders. Moses, perhaps, by this time had heard of the blessing, with which Balaam was constrained, fore against his will, to bless Israel, and particularly the notice he took of their numbers, and is sufficiently pleased with that general testimony borne to this instance of their strength and honour by an adversary, though he knows not their numbers exactly, till God now appoints him to take the sum of them. 2. Eleazar is joined in commission with him, as Aaron had been before, by which God honoured Eleazar before the elders of his people, and confirmed his succession. 3. It was presently after the plague, that this account was ordered to be taken; to shew, that though God had in justice contended with them by that sweeping pestilence, yet he had not made a full end, nor would he utterly cast them off. God's Israel shall not be ruined, though it be severely rebuked. 4. They were now to go by the same rule they had gone by in the former numbering, counting those only that were able to go forth to war, for that was the service now before them.

5. ¶ Reuben, the eldest son of Israel: the children of Reuben; Hanoch, of whom cometh the family of the Hanochites: of Pallu, the family of the Palluites: 6. Of Hebron, the family of the Hebronites: of Carmi, the family of the Carmites. 7. These are the families of the Reubenites: and they that were numbered of them were forty and three thousand and seven hundred and thirty. 8. And the sons of Pallu; Eliab. 9. And the sons of Eliab; Nemuel, and Dathan, and Abiram. This is that Dathan and Abiram which were famous in the congregation, who strove against Moses and against Aaron in the company of Korah, when they strove against the LORD: 10. And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, what time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men: and they became a sign. 11. Notwithstanding, the children of Korah died not. 12. ¶ The sons of Simeon after their families: of Nemuel, the family of the Nemulites: of Jamin, the family of the Jaminites: of Jachin, the family of the Jachinites; 13. Of Zerah, the family of the Zarahites: of Shaul, the family of the Shaulites. 14. These are the families of the Simeonites: twenty and two thousand and two hundred. 15. ¶ The children of Gad, after their families: of Zephon, the family of the Zephonites: of Haggi, the family of the Haggites: of Shuni, the family of the Shunites: 16. Of Ozni, the family of the Oznites: of Eri, the family of the Erites: 17. Of Arod, the family of the Arodites: of Areli, the family of the Arelites. 18. These are the families of the children of Gad, according to those that were numbered of them, forty thousand and five hundred. 19. ¶ The sons of Judah were Er and Onan: and Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. 20. And the sons of Judah after their families were; of Shelah, the family of the Shelanites. of Pharez, the family of the Pharazites: of Zerah, the family of the Zerites: 21. And the sons of Pharez were; of Heron, the family of the Hebronites: of Hamul, the family of the Hamulites. 22. These are the families of Judah, according to those that were numbered of them, threescore and sixteen thousand and five hundred. 23. ¶ Of the sons of Issachar after their families; of Tola, the family of the Tolaites; of Pua, the family of the Punites; 24. Of Jashob, the family of the Jashubites; of Shimron, the family of the Shimronites. 25. These are the families of Issachar, according to those that were numbered of them, threescore and four thousand and three hundred. 26. ¶ Of the sons of Zebulun, after their families: Of Sered, the family of the Sardites; of Elon, the family of the Elonites: of Jahleel, the family of the Jahleelites. 27. These are the families of the Zebulunites, according to those that were numbered of them, threescore thousand and five hundred. 28. ¶ The sons of Joseph after their families were Manasseh and Ephraim. 29. Of the sons of Manasseh: of Machir, the family of the Macharites: and Machir begat Gilead: of Gilead come the family of the Gileadites. 30. These are the sons of Gilead; of Jeezer, the family of the Jeezerites; of Helek, the family of the Helekites; 31. And of Asriel, the family of the Asrielites; and of Shechem, the family of the Shechemites; 32. And of Shemida, the family of the Shemidaites; and of Hepher, the family of the Hephherites. 33. ¶ And Zelophehad the son of Hepher had no sons, but daughters; and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad, were Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. 34. These are the families of Manasseh, and those that were numbered of

them, fifty and two thousand and seven hundred. 35. ¶ These are the sons of Ephraim, after their families; of Shuthelah, the family of the Shuthalhites: of Becher, the family of the Bachrites: of Taham, the family of the Tahanites. 36. And these are the sons of Shuthelah; of Eran, the family of the Eranites; 37. These are the families of the sons of Ephraim, according to those that were numbered of them, thirty and two thousand and five hundred. These are the sons of Joseph, after their families. 38. ¶ The sons of Benjamin after their families; of Bela, the family of the Belaites; of Ashbel, the family of the Ashbelites: of Ahiram, the family of the Ahiramites; 39. Of Shupham, the family of the Shuphamites: of Hupham, the family of the Huphamites. 40. And the sons of Bela, were Ard and Naaman: of Ard, the family of the Ardites: and of Naaman, the family of the Naamites. 41. These are the sons of Benjamin after their families: and they that were numbered of them, were forty and five thousand and six hundred. 42. ¶ These are the sons of Dan after their families: of Shuham, the family of the Shuhamites. These are the families of Dan after their families. 43. All the families of the Shuhamites, according to those that were numbered of them, were threescore and four thousand and four hundred. 44. ¶ Of the children of Asher after their families: of Jimna, the family of the Jimnites: of Jesui, the family of the Jesuites: of Beriah, the family of the Berites. 45. Of the sons of Beriah: of Heber, the family of the Heberites: of Malchiel, the family of the Malchielites. 46. And the name of the daughter of Asher, was Sarah. 47. These are the families of the sons of Asher, according to those that were numbered of them, who were fifty and three thousand and four hundred. 48. ¶ Of the sons of Naphtali after their families: of Jahzeel, of the family of Jahzeelites; of Guni, the family of the Gunites; 49. Of Jezer, the family of the Jezerites; of Shillem, the family of the Shillemites. 50. These are the families of Naphtali, according to their families; and they that were numbered of them, were forty and five thousand and four hundred. 51. These were the numbered of the children of Israel, six hundred thousand and a thousand seven hundred and thirty.

This is the register of the tribes as they were now enrolled, in the same order that they were numbered, chap. 1. Observe, 1. The account that is here kept of the families of each tribe; which must not be understood of such as we call families, those that live in a house together, but such as were the descendants of the several sons of the patriarchs, by whose names, in honour of them, their posterity distinguish themselves and one another. The families of the twelve tribes are thus numbered; of Dan but one, for Dan had but one son, and yet that tribe was the most numerous of all, except Judah, ver. 42, 43. Its beginning was small, but its latter end greatly encreased; Zebulun was divided into three families; Ephraim into four; Issachar into four; Naphtali into four; and Reuben into four; Judah, Simeon, and Asher, had five families apiece. Gad and Benjamin seven apiece; and Manasseh eight. Benjamin brought ten sons into Egypt, Gen. xlv. 21. but three of them, it seems, either died childless, or their families were extinct; for here we find seven only of those names preserved, and that whole tribe none of the most numerous. For Providence, in the building up of families and nations, doth not tie itself to probabilities. *The barren hath born seven, and she that hath many children is waxed feeble*, 1 Sam. ii. 5. 2. The numbers of each tribe. And here our best entertainment will be to compare those numbers, with those when they were numbered at mount Sinai. The sum total was very near the same; they were now one thousand eight hundred and twenty fewer than they were then; yet seven of the tribes increased in number: Judah increased one thousand nine hundred, Issachar nine thousand nine hundred, Zebulun three thousand one hundred, Manasseh twenty thousand five hundred, Benjamin ten thousand two hundred, Dan one thousand seven hundred, Asher eleven thousand nine hundred. But the other five decreased more than to balance that increase: Reuben decreased two thousand seven hundred and seventy, Simeon thirty-seven thousand one hundred, Gad five thousand one hundred and fifty, Ephraim eight thousand, and Naphtali eight thousand. In which account we may observe, (1.) That all the three tribes that were encamped under the standard of Judah, who was the ancestor of Christ, were increased, for his Church shall be edified and multiplied. (2.) That none of the tribes increased so much as that of Manasseh, which in the former account was the smallest of all the tribes, but thirty-two thousand two hundred; but here is one of the most considerable; and his brother Ephraim, which there was numerous, is here one of the least. Jacob had crossed hands upon their heads, and had preferred Ephraim before Manasseh, which perhaps the Ephraimites and prided themselves too much in, and had trampled upon their brethren the Manassites; but when the Lord saw that Manasseh was despised, he thus multiplied him exceedingly; for it is his glory to help the weakest, and raise up them that are cast down. (3.) That none of the tribes decreased so much as Simeon did, from fifty-nine thousand three hundred, it sunk to twenty-two thousand two hundred; almost to but a third part of what it was. One whole family of that tribe, (viz. Ohad, mentioned in Exod. vi. 15.) was extinct in the wilderness. Hence Simeon is not mentioned in Moses's blessing, Deut. xxxiii. and the lot of that tribe in Canaan was inconsiderable, only a canton out of Judah's lot, Josh. xix. 9. Some conjecture that most of those twenty-four thousand which were cut off by the plague for the iniquity of Peor were of that tribe; for Zimri, who was ring-leader in that iniquity was a prince of that tribe; many of whom therefore were influenced by his example to follow his pernicious ways. 3. In the account of the tribe of Reuben, mention is made of the rebellion of Dathan and Abiram, who were of that tribe, in confederacy with Korah a Levite,

ver. 9, 10, 11. Though the story had been largely related but a few chapters before, yet here it comes in again, as fit to be had in remembrance, and thought of by posterity, whenever they looked into their pedigree, and pleased themselves with the antiquity of their families, and the glory of their ancestors, that they might call themselves a seed of evil-doers. Two things are here said of them: (1.) That they had been *famous in the congregation*, ver. 9. Probably, they were remarkable for their ingenuity and activity, and fitness for business: that Dathan and Abiram, who might have been advanced in due time under God and Moses, but their ambitious spirits put them on striving against God and Moses, and when they quarrelled with the one they quarrelled with the other. And what was the issue? (2.) They that might have been famous were made infamous; they became a sign, ver. 10. They were made monuments of divine justice; God in their ruin shewed himself glorious in holiness; and so they were set up for warning to all others in all ages, to take heed of treading in the steps of their pride and rebellion. Notice is here taken of the preservation of the *children of Korah*, ver. 11. they *died not*; as the children of Dathan and Abiram did; doubtless because they kept themselves pure from the infection, and would not join, no, not with their own father in rebellion. If we partake not of the sins of sinners, we shall not partake of their plagues. These sons of Korah were afterwards in their posterity eminently serviceable to the church, being employed by David as singers in the house of the Lord; hence many psalms are said to be for the sons of Korah: and perhaps they were made to bear his name so long after, rather than the name of any other of their ancestors for warning to themselves, and as an instance of the power of God, which brought those choice fruits, even out of that bitter root. The children of families that had been stigmatized, should endeavour by their eminent virtues to roll away the reproach of their fathers.

52. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 53. Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance, according to the number of names. 54. To many thou shalt give the more inheritance, and to few thou shalt give the less inheritance; to every one shall his inheritance be given, according to those that were numbered of him. 55. Notwithstanding, the land shall be divided by lot, according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. 56. According to the lot shall the possession thereof be divided, between many and few.

If any ask why such a particular account is kept of the tribes and families, and numbers of the people of Israel, here is an answer for them; as they were multiplied, so they were portioned, not by common providence, but by promise; and for the support of the honour of divine revelation, God will have the fulfilling of the promise taken notice of both in their increase and in their inheritance. When Moses had numbered the people, God doth not say, *By these shall the land be conquered*, but taking that for granted, he tells him, *Unto these shall the land be divided*. These that are now registered as the sons of Israel shall be admitted (as it were by copy of court-roll) heirs of the land of Canaan.

Now in the distributing, or quartering of these tribes, 1. The general rule of equity is here prescribed to Moses, that to many he should give more, and to few he should give less (ver. 54.) yet, alas, he was so far from giving any to others, that he must not have any himself; but this direction given to him was intended for Joshua his successor. 2. The application of this general rule was to be determined by lot, ver. 55. notwithstanding it seems thus to be left to the prudence of the prince, yet the matter must be finally referred to the providence of their God, in which they must all acquiesce, how much soever it contradicted their politics and inclinations, *According to the lot shall the possession be divided*. As the God of nations, so the God of Israel in particular reserves it to himself to appoint the bounds of our habitation. And thus Christ our Joshua, when he was urged to appoint one of his disciples to his right hand, and another to his left in his kingdom, acknowledged the sovereignty of his Father in the disposal; *It is not mine to give*. Joshua must not dispose of inheritance in Canaan according to his own mind, but it shall be given to them, for whom it is prepared of my Father.

57. ¶ And these are they that were numbered of the Levites after their families: of Gershon, the family of the Gershonites: of Kohath, the family of the Kohathites: of Merari, the family of the Merarites. 58. These are the families of the Levites: the family of the Libnites, the family of the Hebronites, the family of the Mahlites, the family of the Mushites, the family of the Korathites: and Kohath begat Amram. 59. And the name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, whom her mother bare to Levi in Egypt: and she bare unto Amram, Aaron and Moses, and Miriam their sister. 60. And unto Aaron was born Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. 61. And Nadab and Abihu died, when they offered strange fire before the LORD. 62. And those that were numbered of them, were twenty and three thousand, all males from a month old and upward: for they were not numbered among the children of Israel, because there was no inheritance given them among the children of Israel.

Levi was God's tribe; a tribe that was to have no inheritance with the rest in the land of Canaan, and therefore was not numbered with the rest, but by itself; so it had been numbered in the beginning of this book at mount Sinai, and therefore came not under the sentence passed upon all that were then numbered, that none of them should enter Canaan, but Caleb and Joshua; for of the Levites that were not numbered with them, nor were to go forth to war, there were Eleazar and Ithamar, and perhaps others, who were above twenty years old then (as appears, *Numb. iv. 16—28.*) entered Canaan; and yet this tribe now at its second numbering was increased but one thousand; and was still one of the smallest tribes. Mention is made here of the death of Nadab and Abihu for offering strange fire, as before of the sin and punishment of Korah, because *these things happened unto them for examples*.
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63. ¶ These are they that were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab, by Jordan near Jericho. 64. But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. 65. For the LORD had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness: and there was not left a man of them, save Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua, the son of Nun.

That which is observable in this conclusion of the account is, the execution of the sentence passed upon the murmurers, *Numb. xiv. 29*. That not one of those who were numbered from twenty years old and upward, (and that the Levites were not, but either from a month old, or from thirty years old to fifty) should enter Canaan except Caleb and Joshua. In the muster now made, particular directions, no doubt, were given to those of each tribe, that were employed in taking the account, to compare these rolls with the former, and to observe whether there were any now left of those that were numbered at mount Sinai, and it appeared that there was not one man numbered now, that was numbered then, but Caleb and Joshua, ver. 64, 65. Herein appeared, 1. The righteousness of God, and his faithfulness to his threatenings, when once the decree is gone forth. *He swore in his wrath*, and what he had sworn he performed. Better all these carcasses, had they been ten times as many, should fall to the ground, than the word of God. Though the rising generation were mixed with them, and many of the guilty and condemned criminals long survived the sentence, even to the last year of the forty, yet they were cut off by some means or other before this muster was made; those whom God has condemned cannot escape, either by losing themselves in a crowd, or by the delay of execution. 2. The goodness of God to this people notwithstanding their provocations; though that murmuring race was cut off, yet God raised up another generation, which was upon the matter as numerous as they, that though they perished, yet the name of Israel might not be cut off, lest the inheritance of the promise should be lost for wants of heirs. And though the number fell a little short of what it was at mount Sinai, yet these now numbered had this advantage, that they were all middle-aged men, between twenty and sixty, in the prime of their time for service; and during the thirty-eight years of their wandering, and wasting in the wilderness, they had opportunity of acquainting themselves with the laws and ordinances of God, having no business, civil or military, to divert them from those sacred studies: and having Moses and Aaron to instruct them, and God's good Spirit, *Neh. ix. 10*. 3. The truth of God, in performing his promise made to Caleb and Joshua. They were to be preserved from falling in this common ruin, and they were so. The arrows of death, though they fly in the dark they do not fly at random, even when they fly thickest, but are directed to the mark intended, and no other. All that were written among the living shall have their lives given them for a prey, in the most dangerous times. Thousands may fall on their right hand, and ten thousand on their left, but they shall escape.

C H A P. XXVII.

Here is, 1. The case of Zelophehad's daughters determined, ver. 1—11. 2. Notice given to Moses of his death approaching, ver. 12—14. Provision made of a successor in the government, 1. By the prayer of Moses, ver. 15—17. 2. By the appointment of God, ver. 18—23.

1. THEN came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh, the son of Joseph; and these are the names of his daughters; Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah. 2. And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, 3. Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah: but died in his own sin, and had no sons. 4. Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son? Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father. 5. And Moses brought their cause before the LORD. 6. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 7. The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren, and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them. 8. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter. 9. And if he have no daughter, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his brethren. 10. And if he have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his father's brethren. 11. And if his father have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his kinsman, that is next to him of his family, and he shall possess it: and it shall be unto the children of Israel a statute of judgment, as the LORD commanded Moses.

Mention was made of the case of the daughters of Zelophehad, in the chapter before, ver. 33. It should seem by the particular notice taken of it, that it was a singular case, and that the like did not at this time occur in all Israel, that the head of a family had no sons but daughters only; their case is again debated, *chap. xxxvii.* upon another article of it; and according to the judgments given in their case we find them put in possession, *Josh. xvii. 3*. One would think their personal character was such as added weight

weight to their case, and made it to be so often taken notice of. Here is, 1. Their case stated by themselves, and their petition upon it presented to the highest court of judicature, which consisted of Moses asking, the princes as lords, and the congregation, or elders of the people, who were chosen their representatives, as the commons, *ver. 2.* This august assembly sat near the *door of the tabernacle*, that in difficult cases they might consult the oracle. To them these young ladies made their application: for it is the duty of magistrates to *defend the fatherless*, *Psal. lxxxii. 3.* We find not that they had any advocate to speak for them, but they managed their own cause ingeniously enough, which they could do the better, because it was plain and honest, and spoke for itself.

Now observe, 1. What it is they petition for: that they might have a possession in the land of *Canaan among the brethren of their father*, *ver. 4.* What God has said to Moses, *chap. xxvi. 53.* he had faithfully made known to the people, that the land of Canaan was to be divided among those that were now numbered; these daughters knew they were not numbered, and therefore by this rule must expect no inheritance, and the family of their father must be looked upon as extinct, and written childless, though he had all these daughters: this they thought hard, and therefore prayed to be admitted heirs to their father, and to have an inheritance in his right. If they had had a brother they would not have applied to Moses (as one did to Christ, *Luke xii. 13.*) for an order to *inherit with him*. But having no brother they beg for a possession. Herein they discovered, (1.) A strong faith in the power and promise of God, concerning the giving of the land of Canaan to Israel. Though it was yet unconquered, untouched, and in the full possession of the natives, yet they petition for their share in it, as if it were all their own already. See *Psal. lx. 7. God hath spoken in his holiness, and then Gilead is mine, Manasse is mine.* (2.) An earnest desire of a place and name in the land of promise, which was a type of heaven; and if they had, as some think an eye to that, and by this claim laid hold on eternal life, they were *five wise virgins* indeed; and their example should quicken us with all possible diligence to make sure our title to the heavenly inheritance, in the disposal of which, by the covenant of grace, no difference is made between *male and female*, *Gal. iii. 28.* (3.) A true respect and honour for their father, whose name was dear and precious to them now he was gone, and they were therefore solicitous that it should not be *done away from among his family*. There is a debt which children owe to the memory of their parents, required by the fifth commandment; *Honour thy father and mother.* 2. What their plea is; That their father did not die under any attainder which might be thought to have corrupted his blood, and forfeited his estate, but he *died in his own sin*, *ver. 3.* not engaged in any mutiny or rebellion against Moses, particularly not in that of Korah, and his company, nor any way concerned in the sins of others, but chargeable only with the common iniquities of mankind, for which to his own master he was to stand or fall, but laid not himself open to any judicial process before Moses and the princes. He was never convicted of any thing that might be a bar to his children's claim. It is a comfort to parents when they come to die, if that though they smart themselves for their own sin, yet they are not conscious to themselves of any of those iniquities which God visits upon the children.

2. Their case determined by the divine oracle. Moses not daring to give judgment himself, because though their pretensions seem just and reasonable, yet his express orders were to divide the land among those that were numbered, which were the males only; he therefore *brings their cause before the Lord*, and waits for his decision, *ver. 5.* and God himself gives judgment upon it. He takes cognizance of the affairs not only of nations, but of private families, and orders them in judgment, according to the counsel of his own will. (1.) The petition is granted, *ver. 7. They speak right, give them a possession.* Those that seek an inheritance in the land of promise shall have what they seek for, and *other things shall be added to them*. Those are claims which God will countenance and crown. (2.) The point is settled for hereafter. These daughters of Zelophehad consulted not only their own comfort, and the credit of their family, but the honour and happiness of their sex likewise; for on this particular occasion a general law was made, that in case a man had no son, his estate should go to his daughters, *ver. 8.* Not to the eldest, as the eldest son, but to them all in co-partnership, share and share alike. Those that in such a case deprive their daughters of their right, purely to keep up the name of their family, unless a valuable consideration be allowed them, may make the detail of their lands surer than the entail of a blessing with them. Further directions are given for the disposal of inheritances, *ver. 9, 10, 11.* That if a man have no issue at all, his estate shall go to his brethren: if no brethren, then to his father's brethren; and if there be no such, then to the next kinsmen; with this the rules of our law exactly agree: and though the Jewish doctors here will have it understood that if a man have no children his estate shall go to his father if living, before his brethren, yet there is nothing of that in the law, and our common law has an express rule against it; That an estate cannot ascend lineally, so that if a son purchase lands in fee-simple, and die without issue in the lifetime of his father, his father cannot be his heir. See how God makes heirs, and in his disposal we must acquiesce.

12. ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. 13. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto the people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered. 14. For ye rebelled against my commandment (in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation) to sanctify me at the water before their eyes: that is the water of Meribah in Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin.

Here, 1. God tells Moses of his faults; his speaking unadvisedly with his lips at the Waters of Strife, where he did not express so carefully as he ought to have done a regard to the honour both of God and Israel, *ver. 14.* Though Moses was a servant of the Lord, a faithful servant, yet once he *rebelled against God's commandments*, and failed in his duty; and though a very honourable servant, and highly favoured, yet he shall hear of his miscarriage, and all the world shall hear of it too again and again; for God will shew his displeasure against sin, even in those that are nearest and dearest to him. Those that are in reputation for wisdom and honour have need to be constantly careful of their words and ways, lest at any time they say or do that which may be a diminution either to their comfort or to their credit, or both a great while after. 2. He tells Moses of his death; his death was the punishment of his sin, and yet notice is given him of it in such a manner as might best serve to sweeten and mollify the sentence, and reconcile him to it. 1. Moses must die, but he shall first have the satisfaction of seeing the land of promise, *ver. 14.* God did not intend with this sight of Canaan to tantalize him, or upbraid him with his folly in doing that which cut him

short of it, nor had it any impression of that kind upon him, but God appointed it, and Moses accepted it as a favour; his sight (we had reason to think) being wonderfully strengthened and enlarged to take such a full and distinct view of it as did abundantly gratify his innocent curiosity. This sight of Canaan signified his believing prospect of the better country, that is the heavenly, which is very comfortable to dying saints. 2. Moses must die, but death doth not cut him off, it only gathers him to his people, brings him to rest with the holy patriarchs that were gone before him; Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, were his people, the people of his choice and love, and to them death gathered him. 3. Moses must die, but only as Aaron died before him, *ver. 13.* And Moses had seen how easily and cheerfully Aaron had put off the priesthood first, and then the body: let not Moses therefore be afraid of dying, it was but to be gathered to his people, as Aaron was gathered. Thus the death of our near and dear relations should be improved by us. (1.) As an engagement to us to think often of dying; we are not better than our fathers or brethren, if they are gone, we are a going; if they are gathered already, we must be gathered very shortly. (2.) As an encouragement to us to think of death without terror, and even to please ourselves with the thoughts of it; it is but to die as such and such died, if we live as they lived, and their end was peace, they finished their course with joy; why then should we fear any evil in that melancholy valley!

15. ¶ And Moses spake unto the LORD, saying, 16. Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, 17. Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in: that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd. 18. ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; 19. And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. 20. And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. 21. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him, after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation. 22. And Moses did as the LORD commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation. 23. And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.

Here, 1. Moses prays for a successor. When God had told him he must die, though it appears elsewhere he solicited for a reprieve for himself, *Deut. iii. 24.* yet when that could not be obtained, he begged earnestly that the work of God might be carried on, though he might not have the honour of finishing it. Envious spirits do not love their successors, but Moses was none of those. We should concern ourselves both in our prayers and in our endeavours for the rising generation, that religion may flourish, and the interests of God's kingdom among men may be obtained and advanced when we are in our graves. In this prayer Moses expresseth, (1.) A tender concern for the people of Israel, *That the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd.* Our Saviour useth this comparison in his compassions for the people, when they wanted good ministers, *Matt. ix. 6.* Magistrates and Ministers are the shepherds of a people, if those be wanting or are not as they should be, people are apt to wander and be scattered abroad, are exposed to enemies, in danger of wanting food, and of hurting one another, *as sheep having no shepherd.* (2.) A believing dependence upon God, as the God of the spirits of all flesh. He is both the former and the latter of spirits, and therefore can either find men fit, or make them fit, to serve his purposes, for the good of his Church. He prays to God not to send an angel, but to set a man over the congregation, i. e. to nominate and appoint one whom he could qualify and own, as ruler of his people Israel. Before God gave this blessing to Israel, he stirred up Moses to pray for it: thus Christ before he sent forth his apostles, called to those about him, *to pray the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest*, *Matt. ix. ult.*

2. God, in answer to his prayer, appoints him a successor, even Joshua, who had long since signalized himself for his courage in fighting Amalek, his humility in ministering to Moses, and his faith and sincerity in witnessing against the report of the evil spies, this is the man God pitches upon to succeed Moses. *A man in whom is the spirit, the spirit of grace;* he is a good man, fearing God and hating covetousness, and acting from a principle; *the spirit of government;* he is fit to do the work, and discharge the trusts of his place; a spirit of conduct and courage; and he had also the *spirit of prophecy*, for the Lord often spake unto him, *Josh. iv. 1. vi. 2. vii. 10.* Now here, 1. God directs Moses how to secure the succession to Joshua. (1.) He must ordain him; *lay thine hand upon him.* This was done in token of Moses transferring the government to him, as the laying of hands on the sacrifice put the offering in the place and stead of the offerer; also in token of God's conferring the blessing of the Spirit upon him; which Moses obtained by prayer. It is said, *Deut. xxxiv. 9. Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him.* This rite of imposing hands we find used in the New Testament in setting apart of gospel ministers, noting a solemn designation of them to the office, and an earnest desire that God would qualify them for it, and own them in it. It is the offering of them to Christ and his Church for living sacrifices. (2.) He must present him to Eleazar and the people; set him before them, that they might know him to be designed of God for this great trust, and consent to that designation. (3.) He must give him a charge. *He must be charged with the people of Israel*, who were delivered into his hands as sheep into the hand of a shepherd, and of whom he must be accountable: he must be strictly charged to do his duty to them; though they were under his command, he was under God's command, and from him must receive charge; the highest must know, there is a *higher than they*. This charge must be given him in their sight, that it might be the more affecting to Joshua, and that the people seeing the work and care of their prince, might be the more engaged to assist and encourage him. (4.) He must put some of his honour upon him, *ver. 20.* Joshua at the most had but some of the honour of Moses, and in many instances

stances come short of him; but this seems to be meant of his taking him now, while he lived, into partnership with him in the government, and admitting him to act with authority as his assistant. It is an honour to be employed for God and his Church; *some of this honour must be put upon Joshua*, that the people being used to obey him while Moses lived, they might the more cheerfully do it afterwards. (5.) He must appoint Eleazar the high-priest, with his breast-plate of judgment, to be his privy-council, *ver. 21. He shall stand before Eleazar*, by him to consult the oracle, ready to receive and observe all the instructions that should be given him by it. This was a direction to Joshua, though he was full of the Spirit, and had all this honour put upon him, yet he must do nothing without asking counsel of God, not leaning to his own understanding: It was also a great encouragement to him; to govern Israel, and to conquer Canaan, were two hard tasks, but God assures him that in both he should be under a divine conduct; and in every difficult case God would advise him to that which would be for the best. Moses had recourse to the oracle of God himself, but Joshua, and the succeeding judges, must use the ministry of the high-priest, and consult the judgment of Urim, which the Jews say, might not be enquired of but by the king, or the head of the Sanhedrim, or by the agent or representative of the people, for them, and in their name. Thus the government of Israel was now purely divine, for both the designation and direction of their princes were entirely so. *At the word of the priest according to the judgment of Urim*, Joshua and all Israel must go out and come in; and no doubt God who thus guided, would preserve both their going out and coming in. Those are safe, and may be easy that follow God, and in all their ways acknowledge him. 2. Moses doth according to these directions, *ver. 22, 23.* He cheerfully ordained Joshua. 1. Though it was a present lessening to himself, and amounted almost to a resignation of the government, he it very willing that the people should look off him, and adore the rising sun. 2. Though it was a perpetual slur upon his family. It had no been so much his praise, if he had thus resigned his honour to a son of his own; but with his own hands to ordain Eleazar first high-priest, and now Joshua, one of another tribe, chief ruler, while his own children had no preferment at all, but were left in the rank of common Levites; this was such an instance of self-denial, and submission to the will of God, and was more his glory than the highest advancement of his family could have been; for it confirms his character of his being the meekest man upon earth, and faithful to him that appointed him in all his house. This (saith the excellent Bishop Patrick) shews him to have had a principle which raised him above all other law-givers, who always took care to establish their families in some share of that greatness, which they themselves possessed; but hereby it appeared Moses acted not from himself because he acted not for himself.

C H A P. XXVIII.

Now the people were numbered, orders given for the dividing of the land, and a general of the forces nominated and commissioned; one would have expected that the next chapter should have begun the history of the campaign, or at least should have given us an account of the ordinances of war; no, it contains the ordinances of worship, and provides that now they were entering Canaan, they should be sure to take their religion along with them, and not forget that, in the prosecution of their wars, ver. 1, 2. The laws are here repeated and summed up concerning the sacrifices that were to be offered, 1. Daily, ver. 3—8. 2. Weekly, ver. 9, 10. 3. Monthly, ver. 11—15. 4. Yearly, 1. At the passover, ver. 16—25. 2. At Pentecost, ver. 26—31. And the next chapter is concerning the annual solemnities of the seventh month.

1. **AND** the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2. **Command** the children of Israel, and say unto them, My offering and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire for a sweet savour unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season. 3. And thou shalt say unto them, This is the offering made by fire, which ye shall offer unto the LORD; two lambs of the first year without spot, day by day for a continual burnt-offering, 4. The one lamb shalt thou offer in the morning, and the other lamb shalt thou offer at even. 5. And a tenth part of an ephah of flour for a meat-offering, mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil. 6. It is a continual burnt offering, which was ordained in mount Sinai, for a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD. 7. And the drink-offering thereof shall be the fourth part of an hin for the one lamb: in the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine to be poured unto the LORD for a drink-offering. 8. And the other lamb shalt thou offer at even: as the meat-offering of the morning, and as the drink offering thereof thou shalt offer it, a sacrifice made by fire of a sweet savour unto the LORD.

Here is, 1. A general order given concerning the offerings of the Lord which were to be brought in their season, *ver. 2.* These laws are here given afresh, not because the observance of them was wholly disused, during their thirty-eight years wandering in the wilderness, we cannot think they were so long without any public worship, but that at least the daily lamb was offered morning and evening, and doubled on the sabbath day; so Bishop Patrick conjectures; but that many of the sacrifices were then omitted, is plainly intimated, *Amos v. 25.* quoted by Stephen, *Acts vii. 42.* Did ye offer unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? It is implied, no, you did not. But whether the course of sacrifices had been interrupted or no, God saw fit now to repeat the law of sacrifices; 1. Because this was a new generation of men, that were most of them unborn when the former laws were given; therefore, that they might be left without excuse, they have not only these laws written, to be read to them, but again repeated from God himself, and put into a less compass and a plainer method. 2. Because they were now entering upon war, and might be tempted to think that while they were engaged in that, they should be excused from offering sacrifices; *inter arma silent leges.* No, saith God, my bread for my sacrifices even now shall ye observe to offer, and that in their due season. They were then concerned to keep their peace with God, when

they were at war with their enemies. In the wilderness they were solitary and quite separate from all other people, and therefore there they needed not so much their distinguishing badges, nor would their omission of sacrifices be so scandalous, as when they came into Canaan, when they were mingled with other people. 3. Because possession was now to be given them of the land of promise, that land flowing with milk and honey; where they would have plenty of all good things; now (saith God) when you are feasting yourselves, forget not to offer the bread of your God. Canaan was given them upon this condition, that they should observe God's statutes, *Psal. cv. 44, 45.* 2. The particular law of the daily sacrifice, a lamb in the morning, and a lamb in the evening; which, for the constancy of it, as duly as the day came, is called a continual burnt-offering, *ver. 3.* Which intimates, that when we are bid to pray always, and to pray without ceasing, it is intended that at least every morning and every evening we offer up our solemn prayers and praises to God. This is said to be ordained in mount Sinai, (*ver. 6.*) when the other laws were given. The institution of it we have, *Exod. xxix. 38.* Nothing is added here in the repetition of the law, but that the wine to be poured out in the drink-offering is ordered to be strong wine, *ver. 7.* The richest and most generous and best bodied wine they could get. Though it was to be poured out upon the altar, and not drank, they therefore might be ready to think the worst would serve to be so thrown away, yet God requires the strongest, to teach us, to serve God with the best we have. The wine must be strong (saith Ainsworth) because it was a figure of the blood of Christ, the memorial of which is still left to the Church in wine; and of the blood of the martyrs, which was poured out as a drink-offering upon the sacrifices and service of our faith, *Psal. ii. 17.*

9. ¶ And on the sabbath day, two lambs of the first year without spot, and two tenth deals of flour for a meat-offering, mingled with oil, and the drink-offering thereof. 10. This is the burnt-offering of every sabbath, beside the continual burnt-offering, and his drink-offering. 11. ¶ And in the beginnings of your months ye shall offer a burnt-offering unto the LORD: two young bullocks, and one ram, seven lambs of the first year without spot; 12. And three tenth deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, for one bullock, and two tenth deals of flour for a meat-offering, mingled with oil, for one ram: 13. And a several tenth deal of flour mingled with oil, for a meat-offering unto one lamb, for a burnt-offering of a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD. 14. And their drink-offerings shall be half an hin of wine unto a bullock, and the third part of an hin unto a ram, and a fourth part of an hin unto a lamb: this is the burnt-offering of every month throughout the months of the year. 15. And one kid of the goats for a sin-offering unto the LORD shall be offered, besides the continual burnt-offering and his drink-offering.

The new moons and the sabbaths are often spoken of together, as great solemnities in the Jewish Church, very comfortable to the saints then, and typical of gospel grace. Now we have here the sacrifices appointed. 1. For the sabbaths. Every sabbath-day the offering must be doubled, beside the two lambs offered for the daily burnt-offering, there must be two more offered, one (it is probable) added to the morning sacrifice, and the other to the evening, *ver. 9, 10.* This teacheth us to double our devotions on sabbath-days, for so the duty of the day requires. The sabbath-rest is to be observed, in order to a more close application to the sabbath-work, which ought to fill up a sabbath time. In Ezekiel's temple service which points at gospel times, the sabbath-offerings were to be six lambs and a ram, with their meat-offerings and drink-offerings, *Ezek. xlv. 4, 5.* to intimate not only the continuance, but the advancement of sabbath-sanctification in the days of the Messiah. This is the burnt-offering of the sabbath, in his sabbath, so it is in the original, *ver. 10.* We must do every sabbath-day's work in its day, studying to redeem every minute of the sabbath time, as those that believe it precious; and not thinking to put off one sabbath's work to another, for sufficient to every sabbath is the service thereof. 2. For the new moons. Some suggest, that as the sabbath was kept with an eye to the creation of the world, so the new moons were sanctified with an eye to the divine providence, which appointeth the moon for seasons, guiding the revolutions of time by its changes, and governing tubular bodies (as many think) by its influences, though we observe not any least of new moons, yet we must not forget to give God the glory of all the precious things put forth by the moon, which he hath established for ever, a faithful witness in heaven, *Psal. lxxxix. 37.* The offerings in the new moons were very considerable, two bullocks, a ram, and seven lambs, with the meat-offerings and drink-offerings that were to attend them, *ver. 11, &c.* besides a sin-offering, *ver. 15.* For when we give glory to God, by confessing his mercies, we must give glory to him likewise by confessing our own sins. And when we rejoice in the gifts of common providence, we must make the sacrifice of Christ, that great gift of special grace, the fountain and spring-head of our joy. Some have questioned whether the new moons were to be reckoned among their feasts; but why should they not? when, besides the special sacrifices which were then to be offered, they rested from servile works, *Amos viii. 5.* blew the trumpets, *Numb. x. 10.* and went to the prophets to hear the word, *2 Kings. iv. 23.* And the worship performed in the new moons is made typical of gospel-solemnities, *Isa. lxvi. 23.*

16. And in the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of the LORD. 17. And on the fifteenth day of this month is the feast; seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten. 18. In the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no manner of servile work therein: 19. But ye shall offer a sacrifice made by fire for a burnt offering unto the LORD, two young bullocks, and one ram, and seven lambs of the first year: they shall be unto you without blemish. 20. And their meat-offering shall be of flour mingled with oil: three tenth deals shall ye offer for a bullock, and two tenth deals for a ram. 21. A several tenth deal shalt thou

thou offer for every lamb throughout the seven lambs. 22. And one goat for a sin-offering, to make an atonement for you. 23. Ye shall offer these beside the burnt-offering in the morning, which is for a continual burnt-offering. 24. After this manner ye shall offer daily-throughout the seven days, the meat of the sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet favour unto the LORD: it shall be offered beside the continual burnt-offering, and his drink-offering. 25. And on the seventh day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work. 26. ¶ Also in the day of the first-fruits, when ye bring a new meat-offering unto the LORD; after your weeks be out, ye shall have an holy convocation, ye shall do no servile work. 27. But ye shall offer the burnt-offering for a sweet favour unto the LORD, two young bullocks, one ram, seven lambs of the first year: 28. And their meat-offering of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals unto one bullock, two tenth deals unto one ram. 29. A several tenth deal unto one lamb, throughout the seven lambs. 30. And one kid of the goats to make an atonement for you. 31. Ye shall offer them, besides the continual burnt-offering, and his meat offering, (they shall be unto you without blemish) and their drink-offerings.

Here is, 1. The appointment of the passover-sacrifice, not that which was the chief, the paschal lamb, sufficient instructions had formerly been given concerning that; but those which were to be offered upon the seven days of unleavened bread which followed it, *ver. 17—25*. The first and last of those seven days were to be sanctified as sabbaths, by a holy rest and a holy convocation, and each of the seven days they were to be very liberal in their sacrifices, in token of their great and constant thankfulness for their deliverance out of Egypt; two bullocks, a ram, and seven lambs. A gospel conversation in gratitude for Christ our passover who was sacrificed, is called the *keeping of this feast*, 2 Cor. v. 8. For it is not enough that we purge out the leavened bread of malice and wickedness, but we must offer the bread of our God even the sacrifice of praise continually, and continue herein unto the end. 2. The sacrifices are likewise appointed which were to be offered at the feast of Pentecost, here called the *day of the first-fruits*, *ver. 26*. In the feast of unleavened bread they offered a sheaf of their first-fruits of barley, (which with them was first ripe) to the priests, *Lev. xxiii. 10*. as an introduction to the harvest; but now about seven weeks after they were to bring a new meat-offering to the Lord, at the end of harvest, in thankfulness to God, who had not only given, but preserved to their use the kindly fruits of the earth, so as that in due time they did enjoy them. It was at this feast, that the Spirit was poured out, Acts ii. 1. and thousands were converted by the preaching of the apostles, and were presented to Christ, to be a kind of the first fruits of his creatures. The sacrifice that was to be offered with the loaves of the first-fruits is appointed, *Lev. xviii. 13*. But over and above, besides that, and besides the daily offerings, for they were to offer two bullocks, one ram, and seven lambs, with a kid for a sin-offering, *ver. 27—30*. When God sows plentifully upon us, he expects to reap accordingly from us. Bishop Patrick observes, that no peace-offerings are appointed in this chapter, which were chiefly for the benefit of the offerers, and therefore in them they were left more to themselves; but burnt-offerings, which were purely for the honour of God, and confessions of his dominion, and which figured evangelical piety and devotion, by which the soul is offered up to God in the flames of holy love: and sin-offerings, which were typical of Christ's sacrifice of himself, by which we and our services are perfected and sanctified.

C H A P. XXIX.

This chapter appoints the offerings that were to be made by fire unto the Lord in the three great solemnities of the seventh month. 1. In the feast of trumpets on the first day of that month, *ver. 1—6*. 2. In the day of atonement on the tenth day, *ver. 7—11*. 3. In the feast of tabernacles on the fifteenth day, and the seven days following, *ver. 12—38*. And then the conclusion of these ordinances, *ver. 39, 40*.

1. **A**ND in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, ye shall have an holy convocation, ye shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you. 2. And ye shall offer a burnt-offering for a sweet favour unto the LORD, one young bullock, one ram, and seven lambs of the first year without blemish. 3. And their meat-offering shall be of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals for a bullock, and two tenth deals for a ram: 4. And one tenth deal for one lamb, throughout the seven lambs. 5. And one kid of the goats for a sin-offering to make an atonement for you: 6. Beside the burnt-offering of the month, and his meat-offering, and the daily burnt-offering, and his meat-offering, and their drink-offerings, according unto their manner, for a sweet favour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD. 7. ¶ And ye shall have on the tenth day of this seventh month an holy convocation, and ye shall afflict your souls: ye shall not do any work therein. 8. But ye shall offer a burnt-offering unto the LORD for a sweet favour, one young bullock, one ram, and seven lambs of the first year: they shall be unto you without blemish. 9. And their meat-offering shall be of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals to a bullock, and two tenth deals to one ram: 10. A several tenth deal for one lamb throughout the seven lambs: 11. One kid of the goats for a

sin-offering, beside the sin-offering of atonement, and the continual burnt offering, and the meat-offering of it, and their drink-offerings.

There were more sacred solemnities in the seventh month than in any other month of the year; not only because it had been the first month, till the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, which falling into the month Abib, that was henceforth made the beginning of the months in all ecclesiastical computations; but because still it continued the first month in the civil reckonings of the jubilees, and years of release; and also because it was the time of vacation between harvest and seedness, when they had most leisure to attend the sanctuary: which intimates, that though God will dispense with sacrifices, in consideration of works of necessity and mercy, yet the more leisure we have from the pressing occasions of this life, the more time we should spend in the immediate service of God.

1. We have here the appointment of the sacrifices that were to be offered on the first day of the month, the day of blowing the trumpets; which was as preparative for the two great solemnities of holy mourning on the day of atonement, and holy joy in the feast of tabernacles. The intention of divine institutions is then well answered, when one religious service helps to fit us for another, and all for Heaven. The blowing of the trumpets was appointed, *Lev. xxix. 1*. Here they are directed what sacrifices to offer on that day, on which there was not then any mention made. Note, Those who would know the mind of God in the scripture, must compare one part of the scripture with another, and put those parts together that have reference to the same thing, for the latter discoveries of divine light explain what was dark, and supply what was defective in the former, that the mind of God may be perfect. The sacrifices than to be offered are particularly ordered here, *ver. 2—6*. And care taken that these should not supersede the daily oblation, and that of the new moon. It is hereby intimated, that we must not seek occasions to abate our zeal in God's service, or be glad of an excuse to omit a good duty, but rather rejoice in an opportunity of accumulating, and doing more than ordinary in religion. If we perform family-worship, we must not think that that will excuse us from our secret devotions; nor that the days we go to church we need not worship God alone and with our families; but we should always abound in the work of the Lord. 2. On the day of atonement. Besides all the services of that day which we had the institution of, *Lev. xvi.* and which one would think required trouble and charge enough; here are burnt-offerings ordered to be offered, *ver. 8—10*. For in our faith and repentance, those two great-gospel graces which were signified by that day's performances, we must have an eye to the glory and honour of God, which was purely intended in the burnt-offerings, there was likewise to be a kid of the goats for a sin-offering, beside the great sin-offering of atonement, *ver. 11*. which intimates that there are so many defects and amisses, even in the excesses and expressions of our repentance, that we have need of an interest in sacrifice to expiate the guilt even of that part of our holy things. Though we must not repent that we have repented, yet we must repent that we have not repented better. It likewise spoke the imperfection of the legal sacrifices, and their insufficiency to take away sin, that on the very day the sin-offering of atonement was to be offered, yet there must be another sin-offering. But what the law could not do in that it was weak, that Christ has done.

12. ¶ And on the fifteenth day of the seventh month ye shall have an holy convocation, ye shall do no servile work, and ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days. 13. And ye shall offer a burnt-offering, a sacrifice made by fire of a sweet favour unto the LORD; thirteen young bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs of the first year; they shall be without blemish. 14. And their meat-offering shall be of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals unto every bullock of the thirteen bullocks, two tenth deals to each ram of the two rams: 15. And a several tenth deal to each lamb of the fourteen lambs: 16. And one kid of the goats for a sin-offering, beside the continual burnt-offering, his meat-offering, and his drink-offering. 17. ¶ And on the second day ye shall offer twelve young bullocks, two rams, fourteen lambs of the first year without spot. 18. And their meat-offering, and their drink-offerings, for the bullocks, for the rams, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number, after the manner: 19. And one kid of the goats for a sin-offering, beside the continual burnt-offering, and the meat-offering thereof, and their drink-offerings. 20. ¶ And on the third day, eleven bullocks, two rams, fourteen lambs of the first year without blemish. 21. And their meat-offering, and their drink-offerings, for the bullocks, for the rams, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number, after the manner: 22. And one goat for a sin-offering, beside the continual burnt-offering, and his meat-offering, and his drink-offering. 23. ¶ And on the fourth day ten bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs of the first year without blemish. 24. Their meat-offering, and their drink-offerings for the bullocks, for the rams, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number after the manner: 25. And one kid of the goats for a sin-offering, beside the continual burnt-offering, his meat-offering, and his drink-offering. 26. ¶ And on the fifth day nine bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs of the first year without spot: 27. And their meat-offering, and their drink-offerings, for the bullocks, for the rams, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number, after the manner: 28. And one goat for a sin-offering, beside the continual burnt-offering, and his meat-offering, and his drink-offering. 29. ¶ And on the sixth day eight bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs of the first year

year without blemish: 30. And their meat-offering, and their drink-offerings, for the bullocks, for the rams, and for the lambs, *shall be* according to their number after the manner: 31. And one goat for a sin-offering, beside the continual burnt-offering, his meat-offering, and his drink-offering. 32. ¶ And on the seventh day seven bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs of the first year without blemish: 33. And their meat-offering, and their drink-offerings, for the bullocks, for the rams, and for the lambs, *shall be* according to their number after the manner; 34. And one goat for a sin-offering, beside the continual burnt-offering, his meat-offering, and his drink-offering. 35. ¶ On the eighth day ye shall have a solemn assembly; ye shall do no servile work *therein*. 36. But ye shall offer a burnt-offering, a sacrifice made by fire of a sweet savour unto the LORD, one bullock, one ram, seven lambs of the first year without blemish: 37. Their meat-offering, and their drink-offerings, for the bullock, for the ram, and for the lambs, *shall be* according to their number after the manner; 38. And one goat for a sin-offering, beside the continual burnt-offering, and his meat-offering, and his drink-offering. 39. These things ye shall do unto the LORD, in your set feasts, besides your vows, and your free-will offerings, for your burnt-offerings, and for your meat-offerings, and for your drink-offerings, and for your peace-offerings. 40. And Moses told the children of Israel, according to all that the LORD commanded Moses.

Presently after the day of atonement, that day for men to afflict their souls, followed the feast of tabernacles in which they were to rejoice before the Lord, for they that *flow in tears*, shall soon *reap in joy*. To the former laws about this feast, which we had, *Lev. xxii. 34, &c.* here are added directions about the offerings made by fire which they were to offer unto the Lord during the seven days of that feast, *Lev. xxiii. 36.* Observe here, 1. Their days of rejoicing were to be days of sacrifices. A disposition to be cheerful then doth us no harm, nor is any bad symptom, when it is so far from disfitting us for, that it encourageth and enlargeth our hearts in the duties of God's immediate service. 2. All the days of their dwelling in booths they must offer sacrifices, while we are here in a tabernacle state, it is our interest as well as duty constantly to keep our communion with God: nor will the unfettledness of our outward condition excuse us in our neglect of the duties of God's worship. 3. The sacrifices for each of the seven days, though differing in nothing but the number of the bullocks, are severally and particularly appointed, which yet is no vain repetition; for God would thus teach them to be very exact in those observances, and to keep an eye of faith fixed upon the institution in every day's work. It likewise intimates that the repetition of the same services, if performed with an upright heart, and with a continued fire of pious and devout affection, is no weariness to God, and therefore we ought not to snuff at it, or to say, *Behold what a weariness it is to us!* 4. The number of the bullocks (which were the most costly part of the sacrifice) decreased every day. On the first day of the feast they were to offer thirteen, on the second day but twelve, on the third day eleven, &c. So that on the seventh day they offered seven. And the last day, though it was the great day of the feast, and celebrated with a holy convocation, yet they were to offer but one bullock; and whereas on all the other days, they offered two rams, and fourteen lambs, on this but one ram and seven lambs. Such was the will of the law-maker, and that is reason enough for the law. Some suggest, that God herein considered the infirmity of the flesh, which is apt to grudge at the charge and expence of religion; it is therefore ordered to grow less and less, that they might not complain as if God had made them to *serve with an offering*, *1Sa. xliii. 23.* Or, it is hereby intimated to them, that the legal dispensation should wax old, and vanish away at last; and the multitude of their sacrifices should end in one great sacrifice, infinitely more worthy than them all. It was on the last day of this feast, after all these sacrifices had been offered, that our Lord Jesus stood and cried to those who still *thirsted after righteousness*, (being sensible of the insufficiency of these sacrifices to justify them) *to come unto him and drink*, *John vii. 37.* 5. The meat-offerings and drink-offerings attended all the sacrifices, according to their number after the manner. Be there ever so much flesh, it is no feast without bread and drink, therefore these must never be omitted at God's altar, which was his table. We must not think that doing much in religion will be accepted, if we do not do it well, and after the manner that God hath appointed. 6. Every day there must be a sin-offering offered, as we observed in the other feasts. Our burnt-offerings of praise cannot be accepted of God, unless we have an interest in the great sacrifices of propitiation, which Christ offered, when for us he made himself a sin-offering. 7. Even when all these sacrifices were offered, yet the continual burnt-offering must not be omitted, either morning or evening, but each day that must be offered, first in the morning, and last in the evening. No extraordinary services should jostle out our stated devotions.

Lastly, Though all these sacrifices were required to be by the body of the congregation, at the common charge, yet, besides these, particular persons were to glorify God with their vows and their free-will offerings, *ver. 34.* When God commanded that this they must do, he left room for the generosity of their devotion, a great deal more they might do; not inventing other worships, but abounding in these, as *2 Chron. xxx. 23, 24.* Large directions had been given in *Leviticus*, concerning the offerings of all sorts that should be brought by particular persons; according to the providences of God concerning them, and the graces of God in them. Though every Israelite had an interest in these common sacrifices, yet he must not think that these will serve instead of his vows and his free-will offerings. Thus our ministers praying with us and for us, will not excuse us from praying for ourselves.

C H A P. XXX.

In this chapter we have a law concerning vows, which had been mentioned in the close of the foregoing chapter. 1. Here is a general rule laid down, that all vows must be carefully per-
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formed, *ver. 1, 2.* 2. Some particular exceptions to this rule, 1. That the vows of daughters should not be binding, unless allowed by the father, *ver. 3—5.* Nor, 2. The vows of wives, unless allowed by the husband, *ver. 6—16.*

1. **A**ND Moses spake unto the heads of the tribes, concerning the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded. 2. If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.

This law was delivered to the heads of the tribes, that they might instruct those that were under their charge, explain the law to them, give them necessary cautions upon it, and call them to account, if there were occasion, for the breach of their vows. Perhaps the heads of the tribes had upon some emergency of this kind consulted Moses, and desired by him to know the mind of God, and here they are told it. *This is the thing which the Lord has commanded concerning vows*, and it is a command still in force.

1. The case supposed is, that a person vows a vow unto the Lord, making God a party to the promise, and designing his honour and glory in it. The matter of the vow is supposed to be something lawful: no man can be by his own promise bound to that, which he is already by the divine precept bound from. Yet it is supposed to be something, which in such and such measures and degrees was not a necessary duty antecedent to the vow. A person might vow to bring such and such sacrifices at certain times; to give such a sum, or such a proportion, in alms; to forbear such meats and drinks, which the law allowed; to fast and afflict the soul (which is instanced in *ver. 13.*) at other times besides the day of atonement. And many the like such vows might be made either in an extraordinary heat of holy zeal, or in humiliation for some sin committed, or for the prevention of sin, in pursuit of some mercy desired, or in gratitude for some mercy received. It is of great use to make such vows as these, provided they be made with sincerity and with due caution. Vows (say the Jewish doctors *are the hedge of separation.*) i. e. a fence to religion. He that vows, is here said to *bind his soul with a bond*. It is a vow to God, who is a spirit, and to him the soul with all its powers must be obliged. A promise to man is a bond upon the estate, but a promise to God is a bond upon the soul. Our sacramental vows by which we are bound to no more than what was before our duty, and which neither father nor husband can disannul, are bonds upon the soul, and by them we must feel ourselves bound out from all sin, and bound up to the whole will of God. Our occasional vows concerning that which before was in our own power, *Acts v. 4.* when they are made, are bonds upon the soul likewise.

2. The command given is, that these vows be conscientiously performed. *He shall not break his word*, though afterwards he may change his mind, but he shall do according to what he has said. *Marg. He shall not profane his word.* Vowing is an ordinance of God, if we vow in hypocrisy, we profane that ordinance; it is plainly determined, *Better not vow, than vow and not pay*, *Ecc. v. 6.* *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.* His promises to us are *yea and amen*, let not ours to him be *yea and nay*.

3. If a woman also vow a vow unto the LORD, and bind herself by a bond, being in her father's house, in her youth; 4. And her father hear her vow, and her bond wherewith she hath bound her soul, and her father shall hold his peace at her; then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she hath bound her soul, shall stand. 5. But if her father disallow her in the day that he heareth; not any of her vows, or of her bonds, wherewith she hath bound her soul, shall stand: and the LORD shall forgive her, because her father disallowed her. 6. And if she had at all an husband when she vowed or uttered ought out of her lips, wherewith she bound her soul; 7. And her husband heard it, and held his peace at her in the day that he heard it; then her vow shall stand, and her bonds wherewith she bound her soul, shall stand. 8. But if her husband disallowed her on the day that he heard it; then he shall make her vow which she vowed, and that which she uttered with her lips, wherewith she bound her soul, of none effect, and the LORD shall forgive her. 9. But every vow of a widow, and of her that is divorced, wherewith they have bound their souls, shall stand against her. 10. And if she vowed in her husband's house, or bound her soul by a bond with an oath; 11. And her husband heard it, and held his peace at her, and disallowed her not; then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she bound her soul shall stand. 12. But if her husband hath utterly made them void on the day he heard them; then whatsoever proceedeth out of her lips, concerning her vows, or concerning the bond of her soul, shall not stand: her husband hath made them void, and the LORD shall forgive her. 13. Every vow, and every binding oath to afflict the soul, her husband may establish it, or her husband may make it void. 14. But if her husband altogether hold his peace at her, from day to day, then he establisheth all her vows, or all her bonds which are upon her: he confirmeth them, because he held his peace at her, in the day that he heard them. 15. But if he shall any ways make them void, after that he hath heard them; then he shall bear her iniquity. 16. These are the statutes which the LORD commanded Moses, between a man and his wife, be-

tween the father and his daughter, *being yet* in her youth in her father's house.

It is here taken for granted that all such persons as are at their own disposal (*sui juris*, as we say) and are likewise of sound understanding and memory, whatever they vow that is lawful and possible, they are bound to perform it; but if the person vowing be under the dominion, and at the disposal of another, the case is different.

Two cases much alike are here put, and determined; 1. The case of a daughter in her father's house; and some think, probably enough, that it extends to a son likewise while he is at home with his father, and under tutors and governors. Whether the exceptions may thus be stretched I cannot say. *Non est distinguendum, ubi lex non distinguit.* The rule is general. If a man vow, he must pay. But for a daughter it is express, her vow is ambulatory, and in suspense till her father knows it, and (it is supposed) knows it from her; for when it comes to his knowledge, it is in his power either to ratify or nullify it. But in favour of the vow, 1. Even his silence shall suffice to ratify it, *ver. 4.* If he hold his peace her vows shall stand. Silence gives consent. *Qui tacet, consentire videtur.* Hereby he allows his daughter the liberty she has assumed, and as long as he saith nothing against her vow she shall be bound by it. But, 2. His protestations against it shall perfectly disannul it. Because it is possible such vows may be prejudicial to the affairs of the family, break the father's measures, perplex the provision made for his table (if the vow related to meats) or lessen the provision made for his children, if the vow would be more expensive than his estate would bear; however it was certain it was an infringement of his authority over his child, and therefore if he disallow it she is discharged, and the Lord shall forgive her, i. e. she shall not be charged with the guilt of violating her vow: she shewed her good-will in making the vow, and if her intentions therein were sincere she shall be accepted; and to obey her father shall be accounted better than sacrifice. This shews what a mighty deference children owe to their parents, and how much they ought to honour them and be obedient to them. It is for the interest of the public that the paternal authority be supported, for when children are countenanced in their disobedience to their parents, as they were by the tradition of the elders, *Matth. xv. 5, 6.* they soon become in other things *children of Belial.* If this law be not to be extended to children's marrying without their parents consent, so far as to put it in parents power to null the marriage and dissolve the obligation (as some have thought it doth); yet certainly it proves the sinfulness of it, and obligeth the children that have thus done foolishly to repent and humble themselves before God and their parents.

2. The case of a wife is much the same. As for a woman that is a widow, or divorced, she has neither father nor husband to controul her, so that whatever vows she binds her soul with, they shall stand against her, *ver. 9.* it is at her peril if she run back; but a wife, who has nothing that she can strictly call her own, but with her husband's allowance, without that cannot make any such vow.

1. The law is plain in case of a wife that continues so long after the vow. If her husband allow her vow, though only by silence, it stands, *ver. 6, 7.* If he disallow it, since her obligation to that which she had vowed arose purely from her own act, and not from any prior command of God, her obligation to her husband shall take place of it, for to him she ought to be in subjection, *as unto the Lord*; and now it is so far from being her duty to fulfil her vow, that it would be her sin to disobey her husband, whose consent perhaps she ought to have asked before she made the vow; therefore the needs *forgiveness*, *ver. 8.*

2. The law is the same in case of a wife that soon after becomes a widow, or is put away: Though if she return to her father's house, she doth not therefore so come again under his authority, as that he has power to disannul her vows, *ver. 9.* yet if the vow were made while she was in the house of her husband, and her husband disallowed it, it was made void and of none effect for ever, and she doth not return under the law of her vow when she is loosed from the law of her husband. This seems to be the distinct meaning of *ver. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.* Which otherwise would be but a repetition of *ver. 6, 7, 8.* But it is added, *ver. 15.* That if the husband make void the vows of his wife, he shall bear her iniquity, i. e. if the thing she had vowed were really good, for the honour of God and the prosperity of her own soul, and the husband disallow it out of covetousness, or for an humour, or to shew his authority, though she be discharged from the obligation of her vow, yet he will have a great deal to answer for.

Now here it is very observable how carefully the divine law consults the good order of families, and preserves the power of superior relations, and the duty and reverence of inferiors. It is fit every man should bear rule in his own house, and have his wife and children in subjection with all gravity; and rather than this great rule should be broken, or any encouragement given to inferior relations to break those bonds asunder, God himself would quit his right, and release the obligation even of a solemn vow; so much doth religion strengthen the ties of all relations, and secure the welfare of all societies, and in it the families of the earth are blessed.

C H A P. XXXI.

This chapter belongs to the book of the wars of the Lord, into which it is probable it was inserted. It is the history of a Holy War, a war with Midian. Here is, (1.) A divine command for the war, *ver. 1, 2.* (2.) The undertaking of the war, *ver. 3—6.* (3.) The glorious success of it, *ver. 7—12.* (4.) Their triumphant return from the war. 1. The respect Moses paid the soldiers, *ver. 13.* 2. The rebuke he gave them for sparing the women, *ver. 14—18.* 3. The directions he gave them for the purifying themselves, and their effects, *ver. 19—24.* 4. The distribution of the spoil they had taken; one half to the soldiers, the other to the congregation, and a tribute to the Lord out of each, *ver. 25—47.* 5. The free-will offering of the officers, *ver. 48—54.*

1. AND the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites; afterwards shalt thou be gathered unto thy people. 3. And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the LORD of Midian. 4. Of every tribe a thousand throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall ye send to the war. 5. So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thou-

sand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. 6. And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand.

Here is, 1. The Lord of hosts gives orders to Moses to make war upon the Midianites, and his commission, no doubt, justified this war, though it will not serve to justify the like without such commission. The Midianites were the posterity of Abraham by Keturah, *Gen. xxv. 2.* Some of them settled south of Canaan, among whom Jethro lived, and they retained the worship of the true God; but these were settled east of Canaan, and were fallen into idolatry, neighbours to, and in confederacy with, the Moabites. Their land was not designed to be given to Israel, nor had Israel meddled with them, if they had not made themselves obnoxious to their resentments, by sending their ill women among them to draw them to whoredom and idolatry. This was the provocation, this was the quarrel: For this (saith God) *avenger I, rael of the Midianites*, *ver. 2.* (1.) God would have the Midianites chastised, an inroad made upon that part of their country which lay next to the camp of Israel, and which was concerned in that mischief, probably more than the Moabites, who therefore were let alone. God will have us to reckon those our worst enemies that draw us to sin, and to avoid them; and since every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lusts, and those are the Midianites which ensnare us with their wiles, on them we should avenge ourselves; not only make no league with them, but make war upon them by living a life of mortification. God had taken vengeance on his own people for yielding to the Midianites temptations, now the Midianites must be reckoned with, that gave the temptation, for the deceived and the deceiver are his, (*Job xii. 16.*) both accountable to his tribunal; and though judgment begin at the house of God, it shall not end there, *1 Pet. iv. 17.* There is a day coming, when vengeance will be taken on those that have introduced errors and corruptions into the Church, and the devil that deceived men will be cast into the lake of fire. Israel's quarrel with Amalek that fought against them was not avenged till long after, but their quarrel with Midian that debauched them was speedily avenged, for they were looked upon as much the more dangerous and malicious enemies. (2.) God would have it done by Moses, in his life-time: that he who had so deeply repented that injury, might have the satisfaction of seeing it avenged. See this execution done upon the enemies of God and Israel, and afterwards thou shalt be gathered to thy people. This was the only piece of service of this kind that Moses must further do, and then he has accomplished as a hireling his day, and shall have his quietus: hitherto his usefulness must come, and no further; the wars of Canaan must be carried on by another hand. Note, God sometimes removes useful men, when we think they could ill be spared; but this ought to satisfy us, that they are never removed till they have done the work which was appointed them.

2. Moses gave orders to the people to prepare for this expedition, *ver. 3.* He would not have the whole body of the camp to stir, but they must arm, some of themselves to the war, such as were either most fit or most forward, and avenge the Lord of Midian. God said, *avenger I, rael*, Moses said, *avenger the Lord*, for the interests of God and Israel are united, and the ends of both is one and the same. And if God in what he doth, shews himself jealous for the honour of Israel, sure Israel in what they do ought to shew themselves jealous for the glory of God. Then only we can truly say the avenging of ourselves, when it is the vengeance of the Lord that we are in: Nay for this reason we are forbidden to avenge ourselves because God has said, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay.*

3. A detachment is drawn out accordingly for this service, a thousand out of every tribe, twelve thousand in all; a small number in comparison with what they could have sent, and it is likely small in comparison with the number of the enemies they were sent against. But God would teach them, that it is all one to him to save by many, or by few, *1 Sam. xiv. 6.*

4. Phinehas the son of Eleazar is sent along with them. It is strange, that no mention is made of Joshua in this great action. If he was general of these forces, why do we not find him leading them out? If he tarried at home, why do we not find him meeting them with Moses at their return? It is probable, each tribe having a captain of its own thousand, there was no general, but they proceeded in the order of their march through the wilderness, Judah first and the rest in their posts, under the command of their respective captains (spoken of, *ver. 48.* But the war being a holy war, Phinehas was their common head, not to supply the place of a general, but, by the Oracle of God, to determine the resolves of their councils of war, in which the captains of thousands would all acquiesce, and according to which they would act in conjunction. He therefore took with him the holy instruments or vessels, probably the breast-plate of judgment, by which God might be consulted in any emergency. Though he was not yet the high-priest, yet he might be delegated *pro hac vice* to bear the Urim and Thummim, as *1 Sam. xxiii. 6.* And there was a particular reason for sending Phinehas to preside in this expedition; he had already signalized himself for his zeal against the Midianites, and their cursed arts to ensnare Israel, when he slew Cozbi, a daughter of a chief house in Midian, for her impudence in the matter of Peor, *chap. xxv. 15.* He that had so well used the sword of justice against a particular criminal, was best qualified to guide the sword of war against the whole nation. Thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.

7. And they warred against the Midianites, as the LORD commanded Moses, and they slew all the males. 8. And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword. 9. And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods. 10. And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire. 11. And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts. 12. And they brought the captives, and the prey, and the spoil, unto Moses and Eleazar the priest, and unto the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the camp, at the plains of Moab, which are by Jordan near Jericho.

Here

Here is, 1. The descent which this little army of Israelites made, under the divine commission, conduct, and command, upon the country of Midian. They *warred against the Midianites*. It is very probable, they first published their manifesto, shewing the reasons of the war, and requiring them to give up the ring-leaders of the mischief to justice; for such afterwards was the law, *Deut. xx. 10.* and such the practice, *Judg. xx. 13.* But the Midianites, justifying what they had done, and standing by those that had done it, the Israelites attacked them with fire and sword, and all the pious fury which their zeal for God and their people inspired them with.

2. The execution (the military execution) they did in this descent. (1.) They *slew all the males*, ver. 7. *i. e.* all they met with as far as they went; they put them all to the sword, and gave no quarter. But that they did not slay *all the males* of the nation is certain, for we find the Midianites a powerful and formidable enemy to Israel in the days of Gideon; and that they were the Midianites of this country, for they are reckoned with the *children of the east*, *Judg. vi. 3.* (2.) They *slew the kings of Midian*, the same that are called *elders of Midian*, chap. xxii. 4. and *dukes of Sion*, *Josh. xiii. 21.* Five of these princes are here named, one of which is Zur, probably the same Zur whose daughter Cozbi was, chap. xxv. 15. (3.) They *slew Balaam*. Many conjectures there are, what brought Balaam among the Midianites at this time; it is probable, the Midianites having intelligence of the march of this army of Israelites against them, hired Balaam to come and assist them with his enchantments; that if he could not prevail to act offensively in their favour, by cursing the armies of Israel, yet he might act defensively, by blessing the country of Midian. Whatever was the occasion of his being there, God's over-ruling providence brought him thither, and there his just vengeance found him. Had he himself believed what he said of the happy state of Israel, he would not have herded himself thus with the enemies of Israel, but justly doth he *die the death of the wicked*, though he pretended to desire that of the righteous, and go down *slain to the pit with the uncircumcised*, who rebelled thus against the convictions of his own conscience. The Midianites' wives were Balaam's projects, it was therefore just he should perish with them, *Hos. iv. 5.* Now was his folly made manifest to all men, who foretold the fate of others, but foresaw not his own. (4.) They took all the *women and children captives*, ver. 9. (5.) They *burnt their cities and goodly castles*, ver. 10. not deigning to inhabit them themselves, (that country was out of their line) they thus prevented those who had made their escape, from sheltering themselves in their own country, and settling there again. Some understand it of their idol-temples; it was fit they should share in this vengeance. (6.) They plundered the country, and carried off all the cattle, and valuable goods, and so returned to the king of Israel laden with a very rich booty, ver. 9, 11, 12. Thus (as when they came out of Egypt) they were enriched with the spoils of their enemies, and furnished with stocks for the good land into which God was bringing them.

13. ¶ And Moses and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp. 14. And Moses was wrath with the officers of the host, *with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds*, which came from the battle. 15. And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? 16. Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD. 17. Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man, by laying with him. 18. But all the women children that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves. 19. And do ye abide without the camp seven days: whosoever hath killed any person, and whosoever hath touched any slain, purify *both* yourselves and your captives on the third day, and on the seventh day. 20. And purify all *your* raiment, and all that is made of skins, and all work of goats hair, and all things made of wood. 21. ¶ And Eleazar the priest said unto the men of war which went to the battle, This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD commanded Moses; 22. Only the gold, and the silver, the bras, the iron, the tin, and the lead. 23. Every thing that may abide the fire, ye shall make it to go through the fire, and it shall be clean; nevertheless it shall be purified with the water of separation: and all that abideth not the fire, ye shall make go through the water. 24. And ye shall wash your clothes on the seventh day, and ye shall be clean, and afterward ye shall come into the camp.

We have here the triumphant return of the army of Israel from the war with Midian. And here,

1. They were met with great respect, ver. 13. Moses himself, notwithstanding his age and gravity, walked out of the camp to congratulate their victory, and to grace the solemnity of their triumphs. Public successes should be publicly acknowledged, to the glory of God, and the encouragement of those that have jeopardized their lives in their country's cause.

2. They were severely reprov'd for saving the women alive. It is very likely Moses had commanded them to kill the women, at least that was implied in the general order, to avenge Israel of the Midianites; the execution having reference to that crime, their drawing them in to the worship of Peor, it was easy to conclude that the women, who were the principal criminals, must not be spared. What (saith Moses) *have ye saved the women alive?* ver. 15. He was moved with a holy indignation at the sight of them. *These were they that caused the children of Israel to commit the trespass;* and therefore, (1.) *It is just they should die.* The law in case of whoredom was, *The adulterer and adulteress shall surely be put to death.* God had put to death the adulterers of Israel by the plague, and now it was fit the adulteresses of Midian, especially since they had been the tempters, should be put to death by the sword. (2.) *It is dangerous to let them live;* they will be still tempting the Israelites to uncleanness, and so your captives will be your conquerors, and a second time your destroyers. Severe orders are therefore given, that all the grown women should be slain in cold blood, and only the female children spared.

3. They were obliged to purify themselves, according to the ceremony of the law, and to abide without the camp seven days, till their purification was accomplished. For, (1.) They had had their hands in blood, by which, though they had not contracted any moral guilt, the war being just and lawful, yet they were brought under a ceremonial uncleanness, which rendered them unfit to come near the tabernacle till they were purified. Thus God would preserve in their minds a dread and detestation of murder. David must not build the temple because he had been *a man of war and had shed blood*, 1 Chron. xxviii. 3. (2.) They could not but have touched dead bodies, by which they were polluted, and that required they should be purified with the water of separation, ver. 19, 20—24.

4. They must likewise purify the spoil they had taken; the captives, ver. 19. and all the goods, ver. 21, 22, 23. What would bear the fire must pass through the fire, and what would not must be washed with water. These things had been used by Midianites, and being now come into the possession of Israelites, it was fit they should be sanctified to the service of that holy nation, and the honour of their holy God. To us now every thing is sanctified by the word and prayer, if we are sanctified by the Spirit, who is compared both to fire and water. *To the pure all things are pure.*

25. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 26. Take the sum of the prey that was taken, *both of man and of beast*, thou and Eleazar the priest, and the chief fathers of the congregation: 27. And divide the prey into two parts; between them that took the war upon them, who went out to battle, and between all the congregation. 28. And levy a tribute unto the LORD, of the men of war which went out to battle: one soul of five hundred, *both of the persons, and of the beeves, and of the asses, and of the sheep.* 29. Take it of their half, and give it unto Eleazar the priest, for an heave-offering of the LORD. 30. And of the children of Israel's half, thou shalt take one portion of fifty, of the persons, of the beeves, of the asses, and of the flocks, of all manner of beasts, and give them unto the Levites, which keep the charge of the tabernacle of the LORD. 31. And Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the LORD commanded Moses. 32. And the booty, *being the rest of the prey* which the men of war had caught, was six hundred thousand, and seventy thousand, and five thousand sheep, 33. And threescore and twelve thousand beeves, 34. And threescore and one thousand asses, 35. And thirty and two thousand persons in all, of women that had not known man, by lying with him. 36. And the half, *which was the portion of them that went out to war*, was in number three hundred thousand, and seven and thirty thousand and five hundred sheep. 37. And the LORD's tribute of the sheep was six hundred and threescore and fifteen. 38. And the beeves *were* thirty and six thousand, of which the LORD's tribute *was* threescore and twelve. 39. And the asses *were* thirty thousand and five hundred, of which the LORD's tribute *was* threescore and one. 40. And the persons *were* sixteen thousand, of which the LORD's tribute *was* thirty and two persons. 41. And Moses gave the tribute, *which was the LORD's heave-offering*, unto Eleazar the priest, as the LORD commanded Moses. 42. And of the children of Israel's half, which Moses divided from the men that warred: 43. Now the half *that pertained unto the congregation* was three hundred thousand, and thirty thousand, and seven thousand, and five hundred sheep: 44. And thirty and six thousand beeves: 45. And thirty thousand asses and five hundred: 46. And sixteen thousand persons:) 47. Even of the children of Israel's half, Moses took one portion of fifty, *both of man and of beast*, and gave them unto the Levites which kept the charge of the tabernacle of the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses.

We have here the distribution of the spoil which was taken in this expedition against Midian. God himself directed how it should be done, and Moses and Eleazar did according to the directions. And thus unhappy contests among themselves were prevented, and the victory was made to turn to the common benefit. It was fit he that gave them the prey should order the disposal of it: all we have is from God, therefore must be subject to his will.

1. The prey is ordered to be divided into two parts; one for the twelve thousand men that undertook the war, the other for the congregation. The prey that was divided seems to have been only the captives and the cattle; as for the plate, and jewels, and other goods, every man kept what he took, as is intimated, ver. 50—53. That only was distributed which would be of use for the stocking of that good land into which they were going. Now observe, 1. That the one half of the prey was given to the whole congregation, Moses allotting to each tribe its share, and then leaving it to the heads of the tribes to divide their respective shares among themselves, according to their families. The war was undertaken on the behalf of the whole congregation, they would all have been ready to go to the help of the Lord against the mighty, if they had been so ordered, and they did help, it is likely, by their prayers, and therefore God appoints that they that *tarried at home should divide the spoil*, *Psalm lxxviii. 12.* David in his time made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel, that as his part is that goes down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the staff, 1 Sam. xxx. 24, 25. Those that are employed in public trusts, must not think to benefit themselves only by their toils and hazards, but must aim at the advantage of the community. 2. That yet the twelve thousand that went to the battle, had

as much for their shares as the whole congregation, which were fifty times as many, had for theirs; so that the particular persons of the soldiery had a much better share than any of their brethren that tarried at home: and good reason they should. The greater pains we take, and the greater hazards we run, in the service of God and our generation, the greater will our recompence be at last; for *God is not unrighteous to forget the work and labour of love.*

2. God was to have a tribute out of it. As an acknowledgment of his sovereignty over them in general, and that he was their king, to whom *tribute was due*; and particularly of his interest in this war, and the gains of it, he having given them their success; and that the priest's, the Lord's receivers, might have something added to the provision made for their maintenance. Note, Whatever we have God must have his dues out of it. And here (as before) the soldiers are favoured above the rest of the congregation, for out of the people's share God required one in fifty, but out of the soldiers' share only one in five hundred, because the people got theirs easily, without any peril or fatigue. The less we have opportunity of honouring God with our personal services, the more it is expected we honour him with our substance. The tribute out of the soldiers' half was given to the priests, *ver. 29.* That out of the people's half was given to the Levites, *ver. 30.* For the priests were taken from among the Levites, as these soldiers from among the people, for special service, and hazardous, and their pay was accordingly.

48. ¶ And the officers which were over thousands of the host, the captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds came near unto Moses: 49. And they said unto Moses, Thy servants have taken the sum of the men of war which are under our charge, and there lacketh not one man of us. 50. We have therefore brought an oblation for the LORD, what every man hath gotten of jewels of gold, chains, and bracelets, rings, ear-rings, and tablets, to make an atonement for our souls before the LORD. 51. And Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold of them, even all wrought jewels. 52. And all the gold of the offering that they offered up to the LORD, of the captains of thousands, and of the captains of hundreds, was sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels. 53. (For the men of war had taken spoil, every man for himself.) 54. And Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold of the captains of thousands, and of hundreds, and brought it into the tabernacle of the congregation, for a memorial for the children of Israel before the LORD.

Here is a great example of piety and devotion in the officers of the army; the colonels, that are called *captains of thousands*, and the inferior officers that were *captains of hundreds*; they came to Moses as their general and commander in chief; and, though he was now going off the stage, very humbly and respectfully addressed themselves to him, calling themselves his servants; the honours they had won did not puff them up, so as to make them forget their duty to him. Observe in their address to him,

1. The pious notice they take of God's wonderful goodness to them in this late expedition, in preserving not only their own lives, but the lives of all the men of war that they had under their charge; so that upon the review of their muster-roll it appeared there was not one missing, *ver. 49.* This was very extraordinary, and perhaps cannot be paralleled in any history. So many thousand lives jeopardied in the high places of the field, and not one lost, either by the sword of the enemy, or by any disease or disaster. This was the Lord's doing, and cannot but be marvellous in the eyes of those that consider how the lives of all men, especially soldiers, are continually in their hands. It is an evidence of the tenderness these commanders had over their soldiers, and that their lives were very precious to them, that they looked upon it as a mercy to themselves, that none of those under their charge miscarried. Of all that were given them they had lost none; so precious also is the blood of Christ's subjects and soldiers unto him, *Psal. lxxii. 14.*

2. The pious acknowledgment they make for this favour, *ver. 50.* Therefore we have brought an oblation to the Lord. The oblation they brought was out of that which every man had gotten, and it was gotten honestly by a divine warrant. Thus every man should lay by, according as God hath prospered him, *1 Cor. xvi. 1.* For where God sows plentifully in the gifts of his bounty, he expects to reap accordingly in the fruits of our piety and charity. The tabernacle first, and the temple afterward, were beautified and enriched with the spoils taken from the enemies of Israel; as by David, *2 Sam. vii. 11, 12.* and his captains, *1 Chron. xxvi. 26, 27.* We should never take any thing to ourselves in war, or trade, which we cannot in faith consecrate a part of to God, who hates robbery for burnt-offerings, but when God has remarkably preserved and succoured us, he expects we should make some particular return of gratitude to him.

As to this oblation, 1. The captains offered it to make an atonement for their souls, *ver. 50.* Instead of coming to Moses to demand of God a recompence for the good service they had done in avenging the Lord of Midian, or to set up trophies of their victory, for the immortalizing of their own names, they bring an oblation to make atonement for their souls, being conscious to themselves, as the best men must be even in their best services, that they had been defective in their duty, not only in that instance for which they were reproved, *ver. 14.* but in many others; for there is not a just man upon earth that doth good and sinneth not. 2. Moses accepted it, and laid it up in the tabernacle as a memorial for the children of Israel, *ver. 54.* i. e. a monument of God's goodness to them, that they might be encouraged to trust in him in their further war; and a monument of their gratitude to God; (sacrifices are said to be memorials) that he being well pleased with this thankful acknowledgment of favours bestowed, might continue and repeat his mercies to them.

C H A P. XXXII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The humble request of the tribes of Reuben and Gad, for an inheritance on that side Jordan, where Israel now lay encamped, *ver. 1—5.* (2.) Moses's mis-interpreting of their request, *ver. 6—15.* (3.) Their explication of it, and stating it right, *ver. 16—19.* (4.) The grant of their petition under

the provisos and limitations, which they themselves proposed, *ver. 20—42.*

1. NOW the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle: and when they saw the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that behold, the place was a place for cattle; 2. The children of Gad, and the children of Reuben, came and spake unto Moses and to Eleazar the priest, and unto the princes of the congregation, saying, 3. Ataroth, and Dibon, and Jazer, and Nimrah, and Heshbon; and Elealeh, and Shebam, and Nebo, and Beon; 4. Even the country which the LORD smote before the congregation of Israel, is a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle: 5. Wherefore, said they, if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan. 6. ¶ And Moses said unto the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here? 7. And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel, from going over into the land which the LORD hath given them? 8. Thus did your fathers, when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land. 9. For when they went up into the valley of Eshcol, and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, that they should not go into the land which the LORD had given them. 10. And the LORD's anger was kindled the same time, and he sware, saying, 11. Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, because they have not wholly followed me: 12. Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: for they have wholly followed the LORD. 13. And the LORD's anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the LORD was consumed. 14. And behold, ye are risen up in your fathers' stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the LORD toward Israel. 15. For if ye turn away from after him, he will yet again leave them in the wilderness, and ye shall destroy all this people.

Israel's tents were now pitched in the plains of Moab, where they continued many months, looking back upon the conquests they had already made of the land of Sihon and Og, looking forward to Canaan, which they hoped in a little time to make themselves masters of. While they made this stand, and were at a pause, this great affair of the disposal of the conquests they had already made was here concerted and settled, not by any particular order or appointment of God, but at the special instance and request of two of the tribes, which Moses, after a long debate that arose upon it, consented to. For even then when so much was done by the extraordinary appearances of divine providence, yet many things were left to the conduct of human prudence: for God, in governing both the world and the church, makes use of the reason of men, and serves his own purposes by it.

1. Here is a motion made by the Reubenites and Gadites, that the land they had lately possessed themselves of, and which in the right of conquest belonged to Israel in common, might be assigned to them in particular for their inheritance; upon the general idea they had of the Land of Promise, they supposed this would be about their proportion. Reuben and Gad were encamped under the same standard, and so had the better opportunity of comparing notes, and agreeing this matter between themselves. In the first verse the children of Reuben are named first, but afterwards the children of Gad are, *ver. 2, 25, 31.* either because the Gadites made the first motion, and were most forward for it, or because they were the better spokesmen, and had more of the art of management; Reuben's tribe still lying under Jacob's sentence, *he shall not excel.* Two things common in the world induced these tribes to make this choice, and this motion upon it, the *lust of the eye*, and the *pride of life*, *1 John ii. 16.* (1.) The *lust of the eye.* This land they coveted was not only beautiful for situation, and pleasant to the eye, but it was good for food, food for cattle; and they had a great multitude of cattle, above the rest of the tribes. It is supposed, because they brought more out of Egypt than the rest did, that was forty years before; and flocks of cattle increase and decrease in less time than that; therefore I rather think, they had been better husbands of their cattle in the wilderness, had tended them better, had taken more care of the breed, and not been so profuse as their neighbours in eating the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall. Now they having these large flocks coveted land proportionable. Many scriptures speak of Bashan and Gilead as places famous for cattle; they had been so already, and therefore these tribes hoped they would be so to them, and whatever comes of it, here they desire to take their lot. Judicious Calvin thinks there was much amiss in the principle they went upon, and that they consulted their own private convenience more than the public good; that they had not such regard to the honour and interest of Israel, and the promise made to Abraham of the land of Canaan, (strictly so called) as they ought to have had. And still it is too true, that many seek their own things more than the things of Jesus Christ, *Phil. ii. 21.* And that many are influenced by their secular interest and advantage to take up short of the heavenly Canaan. Their spirits agree too well with this world, and with the things that are seen, that are temporal; and they say, It is good to be here, and so lose what is hereafter for want of seeking it. Lot thus chose by the sight of the eye, and smarted for his choice. Would we choose our portion aright, we must look above the things that are seen. (2.) Perhaps, there was something of the *pride of life* in it. Reuben was the first-born of Israel, but he had lost his birthright; divers of tribes, and Judah especially, had topped him, so that he could not accept the best lot in Canaan? and therefore, to save the shadow of a birth-

right,

right, when he had forfeited the substance, he here catches at the first lot, though it was out of Canaan, and far off from the tabernacle. Thus Esau sold his birth-right, and yet got to be served first with an inheritance in mount Seir. The tribe of Gad descended from the first-born of Zilpah, and were like pretenders with the Reubenites; and Manasseh too was a first-born; but knew he must be eclipsed by Ephraim his younger brother, and therefore he also coveted to get precedence.

2. Moses's dislike of this motion, and the severe rebuke he gives to it, as a faithful prince and prophet.

1. It must be confessed that, *prima facie*, the thing looked ill, especially the closing words of their petition, *ver. 5. Bring us not over Jordan.* (1.) It seemed to proceed from an ill principle: a contempt of the land of promise, which Moses himself was so desirous of a sight of. A distrust of the power of God to dispossess the Canaanites; as if a lot in a land they knew and which was already conquered, was more desirable than a lot in a land they knew not, and which was yet to be conquered; one bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. There seemed to be covetousness in it, for that which they insisted on was, that it was convenient for their cattle. It argued likewise a neglect of their brethren, as if they cared not what became of Israel, while they themselves were well provided for. (2.) It might have been of ill consequence. The people might have taken ill hints from it, and have suggested that they were few enough when they had their whole number to deal with the Canaanites, but how unequal would the match be if they should drop two tribes and a half (above a fifth part of their strength) on this side Jordan. It would likewise be an ill precedent, if they must have the land thus granted them as soon as it was conquered, other tribes might make the same pretensions and claims, and so the regular disposition of the land by lot would be anticipated.

Moses is therefore very warm upon them, which is to be imputed to his pious zeal against sin, and not to any peevishness, the effect of old age, for his meekness abated not, any more than his natural force.

1. He shews them what he apprehended to be evil in this motion, that it would discourage the heart of their brethren, *ver. 6, 7.* What, saith he, with a holy indignation at their selfishness, *shall your brethren go to war, and expose themselves to all the hardships and hazards of the field, and shall you sit here at your ease? No, do not mistake yourselves, you shall never be indulged by me in this sloth and cowardice.* It ill becomes any of God's Israel to sit down unconcerned in the difficult and perilous concerns of their brethren, whether public or personal.

2. He minds them of the fatal consequences of the unbelief and faint-heartedness of their fathers when they were, as these here, just ready to enter Canaan. He recites the story very particularly, *ver. 8—13.* *Thus did your fathers*, whose punishment should be a warning to you to take heed of sinning after the similitude of their transgression.

3. He gives them fair warning of the mischief that would be likely to follow upon this separation they were about to make from the camp of Israel; they would be in danger of bringing wrath upon the whole congregation, and hurrying them all back again into the wilderness, *ver. 14, 15.* *Ye are risen up in your father's stead*, to despise the pleasant land and reject it as they did, when we hoped you were risen up in their stead to possess it: It was an encouragement to Moses to see what an increase of men they were, but a discouragement to see that they were withal an increase of sinful men, treading in the steps of their father's impiety. It is sad to see the rising generation in families and countries seldom better, and often worse than that which went before it: and what comes of it? Why, *it augments the fierce anger of the Lord*; not only continues that fire, but increaseth it, and fills the measure often till it overflow in a deluge of desolation. Note, If men did consider as they ought what would be the end of sin, they would be afraid of the beginning of it.

16. ¶ And they came near unto him, and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones. 17. But we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them unto their place; and our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities, because of the inhabitants of the land. 18. We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance: 19. For we will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan, or forward, because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward. 20. ¶ And Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the LORD to war, 21. And will go all of you armed over Jordan before the LORD, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him, 22. And the land be subdued before the LORD: then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless before the LORD, and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the LORD. 23. But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out. 24. Build ye cities for your little ones, and folds for your sheep, and do that which hath proceeded out of your mouth. 25. And the children of Gad, and the children of Reuben spake unto Moses, saying, Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth. 26. Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our cattle shall be there in the cities of Gilead. 27. But thy servants will pass over, every man armed for war, before the LORD to battle, as my lord saith.

We have here the accommodating of the matter between Moses and the two tribes, about their settlement on this side Jordan. Probably the petitioners withdrew, and considered with themselves what answer they should return to the severe reproof Moses had given them; and, after some consultation, they return with this proposal, that their men of war would go and assist their brethren in the conquest of Canaan, and they would leave their families and flocks behind them in this land: and thus they might have their request, and no harm done.

Now it is uncertain whether they designed this at first when they brought their petition or no. (1.) If they did it, it is an instance how often that which is honestly meant is unhappily misinterpreted. Yet Moses herein was excusable, for he had reason to suspect the worst by them, and the rebuke he gave them was from the abundance of his care to prevent sin. (2.) But No. XXV.

if they did not, it is an instance of the good effect of plain dealing; Moses, by shewing them their sin, and the danger of it, brought them to their duty without murmuring or disputing. They object not that their brethren were enough to deal with the Canaanites without their help, especially since they were sure of God's fighting for them; but engage themselves to stand by them.

1. Their proposal is very fair and generous, and such as instead of discouraging would rather encourage their brethren, (1.) That their men of war, who were fit for service, would go ready armed before the children of Israel into the land of Canaan; so far would they be from deserting them, that if it were thought fit, they would lead them on, and be foremost in all dangerous enterprises. So far were they from either distrusting or despising the conquest of Canaan, that they would assist in it with the utmost readiness and resolution. (2.) That they would leave their families and cattle behind them, who would have been but the incumbrance of their camp, and so they would be the more serviceable to their brethren, *ver. 16.* (3.) That they would not return to their possessions till the conquest of Canaan was completed, *ver. 18.* Their brethren should have their best help as long as they needed it. (4.) That yet they would not expect any share of the land that was yet to be conquered, *ver. 19. We will not desire to inherit with them*, nor under colour of assisting them in the war, put in for a share with them in the land; no, we will be content with our inheritance on this side Jordan, and there will be so much the more on yonder side for them.

2. Moses thereupon grants their request, upon consideration they would stick to their proposals. (1.) He insists much upon it that they should never lay down their arms till their brethren laid down theirs. They promised to go armed before the children of Israel, *ver. 17.* Nay, saith Moses, Ye shall go armed before the Lord, *ver. 20, 21.* It is God's cause more than your brethren's, and to him you must have an eye, not to them only. Before the Lord, i. e. Before the ark of the Lord, the token of his presence, which it should seem they carried about with them in the wars of Canaan, and immediately before which these two tribes were posted, as we find in the order of their march, *Numb. ii. 10—17.* (2.) Upon this condition he grants them this land for their possession, and tells them that they should be guiltless before the Lord, and before Israel, *ver. 22.* They should have the land, and neither sin nor blame cleaving to it; neither sin before God, nor blame before Israel; and whatever possessions we have, it is desirable thus to come guiltless to them. But, (3.) He warns them of the danger of breaking their word; if you fail, you sin against the Lord, (*ver. 23.*) and not against your brethren only, and be sure your sin will find you out, i. e. God will certainly reckon with you for it, though you may make a light matter of it. Note, Sin will without doubt find out the sinner sooner or later. It concerns us therefore to find our sins out that we may repent of them, and forsake them, lest our sins find us out to our ruin and confusion.

3. They unanimously agree to the provisos, and conditions of the grant, and do as it were give bond for performance, by a solemn promise, *ver. 25. Thy servants will do as my Lord commandeth.* Their brethren had all contributed their assistance to the conquest of this country, which they desired for a possession, and therefore they owned themselves obliged in justice to help them in the conquest of that which was to be in their possession. Having received kindness we ought to return it, though it was not so conditioned when we received it. We may suppose this promise was understood on both sides, so as not to oblige all that were numbered of these tribes to go over armed, but those only that were fittest for the expedition, who would be most serviceable, while it was necessary some should be left to till the ground, and guard the country; and accordingly that about forty thousand of the two tribes and a half went over armed, *Josh. iv. 13.* whereas their whole number was about a hundred thousand.

28. So concerning them Moses commanded Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the chief fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel: 29. And Moses said unto them, If the children of Gad, and the children of Reuben will pass with you over Jordan, every man armed to the battle before the LORD, and the land shall be subdued before you, then ye shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession: 30. But if they will not pass over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan. 31. And the children of Gad, and the children of Reuben answered, saying, As the LORD hath said unto thy servants, so will we do. 32. We will pass over armed before the LORD into the land of Canaan, that the possession of our inheritance on this side Jordan may be ours. 33. And Moses gave unto them, even to the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben, and unto half the tribe of Manasseh, the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og, king of Bashan, the land with the cities thereof, in the coasts, even the cities of the country round about. 34. ¶ And the children of Gad built Dibon, and Ataroth, and Aroer, 35. And Atroth, Shopan, and Jaazer, and Jogbehah, 36. And Beth-nimrah, and Beth-haran, fenced cities: and folds for sheep. 37. And the children of Reuben built Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Kirjathaim, 38. And Nebo, and Baal-meon (their names being changed) and Shibmah: and gave other names unto the cities which they builded. 39. And the children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, went to Gilead, and took it, and dispossessed the Amorite which was in it. 40. And Moses gave Gilead unto Machir, the son of Manasseh, and he dwelt therein. 41. And Jair, the son of Manasseh, went and took the small towns thereof, and called them Havoth-jair. 42. And Nobah went and took Kenath, and the villages thereof, and called it Nobah, after his own name.

Here, 1. Moses settles this matter with Eleazar, and with Joshua, who was to be his successor, knowing that he himself must not live to see it perfected, *ver. 28, 29, 30.* He gives them an estate upon condition, leaving it

to Joshua, if they fulfilled the condition, to declare the estate absolute. If they will not go over with you, he doth not say, you shall give them no inheritance at all, but you shall not give them this inheritance which they covet. If their militia will not come over with you, compel the whole tribes to come over, and let them take their lot with their brethren, and fare as they fare; they shall have possessions in Canaan, and let them not expect that the lot will favour them. Hereupon they repeat their promise to stick to their brethren, ver. 31, 32.

2. Moses settles them in the land they desired. He gave it them for a possession, ver. 33. Here is the first mention of the half tribe of Manasseh coming in with them for a share; probably they had not joined with them in the petition, but the land, when it came to be apportioned, proving to be too much for them, this half tribe had a lot among them, either at their request, or by divine direction, or because they had signalized themselves in the conquest of this country; for the children of Machir, a stout and warlike family, had taken Gilead, and dispossessed the Amorites, ver. 39. Let them win it, and wear it; get it, and take it. And they being celebrated for their courage and bravery, it was for the common safety to put them in this frontier country. Concerning the settlement of these tribes here; Observe, (1.) That they built the cities, i. e. repaired them, because either they had been damaged by the war, or the Amorites had suffered them to go to decay. (2.) That they changed the names of them, ver. 38. either to shew their authority, that the change of the names might signify the change of their owners; or because their names were idolatrous, and carried in them a respect to the dunghill deities that were there worshipped. Nebo and Baal were names of their gods, which they were forbidden to make mention of, Exod. xxiii. 13. and which, by changing the names of these cities, they endeavoured to bury in oblivion; and God promiseth to take away the names of Balaam out of the mouths of his people, Hos. ii. 17.

Lastly, it is observable, that these tribes as they were now first placed before the other tribes, so long after they were displaced before the other tribes. We find that they were carried captive in Assyria some years before the other tribes, 2 Kings xxix. Such a proportion doth providence sometimes observe, in balancing prosperity and adversity; he sets the one over against the other.

C H A P. XXXIII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) A particular account of the removes and encampments of the children of Israel, from their escape out of Egypt to their entrance into Canaan; forty-two in all; with some remarkable events that happened at some of those places, ver. 1—49. (2.) A strict command given them to drive out all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, which they were now going to conquer and take possession of, ver. 50—56. So that the former part of the chapter looks back upon their march through the wilderness, the latter looks forward to their settlement in Canaan.

1. **T**HESE are the journeys of the children of Israel, which went forth out of the land of Egypt, with their armies, under the hand of Moses and Aaron. 2. And Moses wrote their goings out, according to their journeys, by the commandment of the LORD: and these are their journeys according to their goings out. 3. And they departed from Rameses, in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month: on the morrow after the passover the children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians. 4. ¶ (For the Egyptians buried all their first-born, which the LORD had smitten among them: upon their gods also the LORD executed judgments.) 5. And the children of Israel removed from Rameses, and pitched in Succoth. 6. And they departed from Succoth, and pitched in Etham, which is in the edge of the wilderness. 7. And they removed from Etham, and turned again unto Pihahiroth, which is before Baalzephon: and they pitched before Migdol. 8. And they departed from before Pihahiroth, and passed through the midst of the sea, into the wilderness, and went three days journey in the wilderness of Etham, and pitched in Marah. 9. And they removed from Marah, and came unto Elim; and in Elim were twelve fountains of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees, and they pitched there. 10. And they removed from Elim, and encamped by the Red sea. 11. And they removed from the Red sea, and encamped in the wilderness of Sin. 12. And they took their journey out of the wilderness of Sin, and encamped in Dophkah. 13. And they departed from Dophkah, and encamped in Alush. 14. And they removed from Alush, and encamped at Rephidim, where was no water for the people to drink. 15. And they departed from Rephidim, and pitched in the wilderness of Sinai. 16. And they removed from the desert of Sinai, and pitched at Kibroth-Hattaavah. 17. And they departed from Kibroth-Hattaavah, and encamped at Hazeroth. 18. And they departed from Hazeroth, and pitched in Rithmah. 19. And they departed from Rithmah, and pitched at Rimmon-Parez. 20. And they departed from Rimmon-Parez, and pitched in Libnah. 21. And they removed from Libnah, and pitched at Rissah. 22. And they journeyed from Rissah, and pitched in Kehelathah. 23. And they went from Kehelathah, and pitched in mount Shapher. 24. And they removed from mount Shapher, and encamped in Haradah. 25. And they removed from Haradah, and pitched in Makheloth. 26. And they

removed from Makheloth, and encamped at Tahath, 27. And they departed from Tahath, and pitched at Tarah. 28. And they removed from Tarah, and pitched in Mithcah. 29. And they went from Mithcah, and pitched in Hashmonah. 30. And they departed from Hashmonah, and encamped at Moseroth. 31. And they departed from Moseroth, and pitched in Bene-jaakan. 32. And they removed from Bene-jaakan, and encamped at Hor-hagidgad. 33. And they went from Hor-hagidgad, and pitched in Jotbathah. 34. And they removed from Jotbathah, and encamped at Ebronah. 35. And they departed from Ebronah, and encamped at Ezion-gaber. 36. And they removed from Ezion-gaber, and pitched in the wilderness of Zin, which is Kadesh. 37. And they removed from Kadesh, and pitched in mount Hor, in the edge of the land of Edom. 38. And Aaron the priest went up unto mount Hor, at the commandment of the LORD, and died there in the fortieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the first day of the fifth month. 39. And Aaron was an hundred and twenty and three years old, when he died in mount Hor. 40. And king Arad the Canaanite (which dwelt in the south, in the land of Canaan) heard of the coming of the children of Israel. 41. And they departed from mount Hor, and pitched in Zalmonah. 42. And they departed from Zalmonah, and pitched in Punon. 43. And they departed from Punon, and pitched in Oboth. 44. And they departed from Oboth, and pitched in Ije-abarim, in the border of Moab. 45. And they departed from Iim, and pitched in Dibon-Gad. 46. And they removed from Dibon-Gad, and encamped in Almondib-lathaim. 47. And they removed from Almondib-lathaim, and pitched in the mountain of Abarim before Nebo. 48. And they departed from the mountains of Abarim, and pitched in the plains of Moab, by Jordan near Jericho. 49. And they pitched by Jordan from Beth-jeshimoth, even unto Abel-shittim, in the plains of Moab.

This is a review and brief rehearsal of the travels of the children of Israel through the wilderness; it was a memorable history and well worthy to be thus abridged, and the abridgment thus preserved is to the honour of God that led them, and for the encouragement of the generations that followed. Observe here,

1. How the account was kept, ver. 2. *Moses wrote their goings out.* When they began this tedious march God ordered him to keep a journal or diary, and to insert in it all the remarkable occurrences of their way, that it might be a satisfaction to himself in the review, and an instruction to others when it should be published. It may be of good use to private Christians, but especially for those in public stations, to preserve in writing an account of the providences of God concerning them, the constant series of mercies they have experienced, especially those turns and changes which have made some days of their lives more remarkable. Our memories are deceitful and need this help, that we may remember all the way which the Lord our God has led us in this wilderness, Deut. viii. 2.

2. What the account itself was. It began with their departure out of Egypt, continued with their march through the wilderness, and ended in the plains of Moab, where they now lay encamped.

3. Some things are observed here concerning their departure out of Egypt, which they are minded of upon all occasions, as a work of wonder never to be forgotten. (1.) That they went forth with their armies, ver. 1. rank and file, as an army with banners. (2.) Under the hand of Moses and Aaron, their guides, overseers, and rulers, under God. (3.) With a high hand, because God's hand was high that wrought for them, and in the sight of all the Egyptians, ver. 3. They did not steal away clandestinely, (Isa. lii. 12.) but in defiance of their enemies, to whom God had made them such a burdensome stone, that they neither could, nor would, nor durst, oppose them. (4.) They went forth while the Egyptians were burying, or at least preparing to bury, their first-born, ver. 4. They had a mind good enough (or ill enough rather) still to have retained the Israelites their prisoners, but God found them other work to do. They would have God's first-born buried alive, but God set them a burying their own first-born. (5.) To all the plagues of Egypt it is added here, that on their gods also the Lord executed judgments. Their idols which they worshipped, it is probable were broken down, as Dagon afterwards before the ark, so that they could not consult them about this great affair. To this perhaps there is reference, Isa. xix. 1. *The idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence.*

4. Concerning their travels towards Canaan.

Observe, 1. They were continually upon the remove. When they had pitched a little while in one place, they departed from that to another. Such is our state in this world; we have here no continuing city. 2. Most of their way lay through a wilderness, uninhabited, untracked, unfurnished even with the necessities of human life; which magnifies the wisdom and power of God, by whose wonderful conduct and bounty the thousands of Israel not only subsisted for forty years in that desolate place, but came out at least as numerous and vigorous as they went in. At first they pitched in the edge of the wilderness, ver. 6. but afterwards in the heart of it; by lesser difficulties God prepares his people for greater. We find them in the wilderness of Etham, ver. 8. of Sin, ver. 11. of Sinai, ver. 15. our removes in this world are but from one wilderness to another. 3. That they were led to and fro, forward and backward, as in a maze or labyrinth, and yet were all the while under the direction of the pillar of cloud and fire. He led them about, Deut. xxxii. 10. and yet led them the right way, Psal. cvii. 7. the way God takes in bringing his people to himself is always the best way, though it doth not always seem to us the next way. 4. Some events are mentioned in this journal, as their want of water at Rephidim, ver. 14. the death of Aaron, ver. 38, 39. the insult of Arad, ver. 40. and the very name of Kibroth-Hattaavah, the graves of lusters, ver. 16. has a story depending upon it. Thus we ought to keep in mind the providences

dences of God concerning us and our families, us and our land; and the many instances of that divine care which has led us, and fed us, and kept us all our days hitherto. Shittim, the place where the people sinned in the matter of Peor, chap. xxv. 1. is here called Abel-shittim; Abel signifies mourning, (as Gen. i. 11.) and probably this place was so called from the mourning of the good people of Israel for that sin, and God's wrath against them for it. It was so great a mourning that it gave a name to the place.

50. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, in the plains of Moab, by Jordan near Jericho, saying, 51. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them. When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan; 52. Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants, of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places. 53. And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein; for I have given you the land to possess it. 54. And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families, and to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man's inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth; according to the tribes of your fathers ye shall inherit. 55. But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them, shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell, 56. Moreover, it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them.

While the children of Israel were in the wilderness their total separation from all other people kept them out of the way of temptation to idolatry, and perhaps that was one thing intended by their long confinement to the wilderness, that thereby the idols of Egypt might be forgotten, and the people aired (as it were) and purified from that infection, and the generation that entered Canaan might be such as never knew those depths of Satan. But now they were to pass over Jordan, they were entering again into temptation, and therefore,

1. They are here strictly charged utterly to destroy all the remnants of idolatry; they must not only drive out the inhabitants of the land, that they might possess their country, but they must deface all their idolatrous pictures and images, and pull down their high places, ver. 52. They must not preserve any of them, no not as monuments of antiquity to gratify their curiosity, or as ornaments of their houses, or toys for their children to play, but they must destroy all; both in token of their abhorrence and detestation of idolatry and to prevent their being tempted either to worship those images, and the false gods represented by them, or to worship the God of Israel by such images or representations.

2. They are assured that if they did so, God would by degrees, put them in full possession of the land of promise, ver. 53, 54. If they would keep themselves pure from the idols of Canaan, God would enrich them with the wealth of Canaan. Learn not their way, and then fear not their power.

3. They are threatened that if they spared either the idols or the idolaters, they should be beaten with their own rod, and their sin would certainly be their own punishment. (1.) They would foster snakes in their own bosom, ver. 55. The remnant of the Canaanites, if they made any league with them, though it were but a cessation of arms, would be pricks in their eyes, and thorns in their sides, i. e. they would be upon all occasions vexatious to them, insulting them, robbing them, and, to the utmost of their power, making mischief among them. We must expect trouble and affliction from that, whatever it is, which we sinfully indulge; that which we are willing should tempt us, we shall find will vex us. (2.) The righteous God would turn that wheel upon the Israelites which was to have crushed the Canaanites, ver. 56. I shall do to you as I thought to do unto them. It was intended that the Canaanites should be dispossessed; but if the Israelites fell in with them, and learned their way, they should be dispossessed, for God's displeasure would justly be greater against them, than the Canaanites themselves. Let us hear this and fear. If we do not drive sin out, sin will drive us out; if we be not the death of our lusts, our lusts will be the death of our souls.

C H A P. XXXIV.

In this chapter God directs Moses, and he is to direct Israel. 1. Concerning the bonds and borders of the land of Canaan, ver. 1—15. 2. Concerning the division and distribution of it to the tribes of Israel, ver. 16—24.

1. AND the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land of Canaan (this is the land that shall fall unto you for an inheritance, even the land of Canaan, with the coasts thereof.) 3. Then your south quarter shall be from the wilderness of Zin, along by the coasts of Edom, and your south border shall be the utmost coast of the salt-sea eastward. 4. And your border shall turn from the south, to the ascent of Akrabbim, and pass on to Zin: and the going forth thereof shall be from the south to Kadesh-barnea, and shall go on to Hazar-addar, and pass on to Azmon. 5. And the border shall fetch a compass from Azmon unto the river of Egypt, and the goings out of it shall be at the sea. 6. And as for the western border, you shall even have the great sea for a border, this shall be your west border. 7. And this shall be your north border: from the great sea, you shall point out for you mount Hor. 8. From mount Hor ye shall

point out your border unto the entrance of Hamath: and the goings forth of the border shall be to Zedad. 9. ¶ And the border shall go on to Ziphron, and the goings out of it shall be at Hazar-enan: this shall be your north border. 10. And ye shall point out your east-border, from Hazar-enan to Shepham. 11. And the coast shall go down from Shepham to Riblah, on the east side of Ain; and the border shall descend, and shall reach unto the side of the sea of Chinnereth east-ward. 12. And the border shall go down to Jordan, and the goings out of it shall be at the salt-sea: this shall be your land with the coasts thereof round about. 13. And Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying, This is the land which ye shall inherit by lot, which the LORD commanded to give unto the nine tribes, and to the half tribe. 14. For the tribe of the children of Reuben, according to the house of their fathers, and the tribe of the children of Gad, according to the house of their fathers, have received their inheritance, and half the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance. 15. The two tribes, and the half tribe have received their inheritance on this side Jordan, near Jericho, eastward, towards the sun-rising.

We have here a particular draught of the line, by which the land of Canaan was meted, and bounded, on all sides. God directs Moses to settle it here, not as a geographer in his map, only to please the curious, but as a prince in his grant, that it may be certainly known what passeth, and is conveyed by the grant. There was a much larger possession promised them, which in due time they should be possessed of, if they had been obedient, reaching even to the river Euphrates, Deut. xi. 24. And even so far the dominion of Israel did extend in David's time and in Solomon's, 2 Chron. ix. 26. But this here described is Canaan only, which was the lot of the nine tribes and a half, for the other two and a half were already settled, ver. 14, 15. Now concerning the limits of Canaan observe, 1. That it was limited within certain bounds: for God appointeth the bounds of our habitation, Acts xvii. 26. The borders are set them, (1.) That they might know whom they were to dispossess, and how far their commission extended which was given them, chap. xxxiii. 53. That they should drive out the inhabitants. Those that lay within these borders and those only they must destroy; hitherto their bloody sword must go and no further. (2.) That they might know what to expect the possession of themselves. God would not have his people to enlarge their desire of worldly possessions, but to know when they have enough, and to rest satisfied with it. The Israelites themselves must not be placed alone in the midst of the earth, but must leave room for their neighbours to live by them. God sets bounds to our lot, let us then set bounds to our desires, and bring our mind to our condition.

2. That it lay comparatively in a very little compass; as it is here bounded, it is reckoned to be but about one hundred and sixty miles in length, and about fifty in breadth; yet it did not contain past half as much ground as England; and yet this is the country which was promised to the father of the faithful, and was the possession of the seed of Israel. This was that little spot of ground in which, duly for many ages, God was known, and his name was great, Psal. lxxvi. 1. This was the vineyard of the Lord, the garden enclosed, but as it is with gardens and vineyards, the narrowness of the extent was abundantly made by the extraordinary fruitfulness of the soil, otherwise it could not have subsisted so numerous a nation as did inhabit it. See here then, (1.) How little a part of the world God hath for himself; though the earth is his, and the fulness thereof, yet few have the knowledge of him, and serve him; but those few are happy, very happy, because fruitful to God. (2.) How little a share of the world God often gives to his own people. That they have their portion in heaven, have reason to be content with a small pittance of this earth; but as here, what is wanting in quantity is made up in quality; a little that a righteous man hath, having it from the love of God, and with his blessing, is far better and more comfortable than the riches of many wicked, Psal. xxxvii. 16.

3. It is observable what the bounds and limits of it were, 1. Canaan was itself a pleasant land, (so it is called, Dan. viii. 9.) and yet it butted upon wildernesses and seas, and was surrounded with divers melancholy prospects. Thus the vineyard of the church is compassed on all hands with the desert of this world, which serves as a foil to it to make it appear the more beautiful for situation. 2. Many of its borders were its defences, and natural fortifications, to render the accesses of its enemies the more difficult; to intimate to them that the God of nature was their protector, and with his favour would compass them as with a shield. 3. The border reached to the river of Egypt, ver. 5. that the sight of that country which they could look into out of their own, might mind them of their bondage there, and their wonderful deliverance thence. 4. Their border is here made to begin at the Salt-sea, ver. 3. and there it ends, ver. 12. That was the remaining lasting monument of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; that pleasant fruitful vale in which these cities stood became a lake, which was never stirred by any wind, bore no vessels, was replenished with no fish, no living creature of any sort being found in it, therefore called the Dead Sea; this was part of their border, that it might be a constant warning to them to take heed of those sins which had been the ruin of Sodom; yet the iniquity of Sodom was afterwards found in Israel, Ezek. xvi. 49. For which Canaan was made, though not a salt-sea as Sodom, yet a barren soil, and continues so to this day. 5. Their western border was the Great Sea, (ver. 6.) which is now called the Mediterranean. Some make that sea itself to be part of their possession, and that by virtue of this grant they had the dominion of it, and if they had not forfeited it by sin, might have rode masters of it.

16. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 17. These are the names of the men, which shall divide the land unto you, Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun. 18. And ye shall take one prince of every tribe to divide the land by inheritance. 19. And the names of the men are these: of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh. 20. And of the tribe of the children of Simeon, Shemuel the son of Ammihud. 21. Of

21. Of the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chiflon. 22. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Dan, Bukki the son of Jogli. 23. The prince of the children of Joseph: for the tribe of the children of Manasseh, Hannial the son of Ephod. 24. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Ephraim, Kemuel the son of Shiptan. 25. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Zebulun, Elizaphan the son of Pharnach. 26. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Issachar, Paltiel the son of Azzan. 27. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Ashur, Ahihud the son of Shelomi. 28. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Naphtali, Pedahel the son of Ammi-hud. 29. These are they whom the LORD commanded to divide the inheritance unto the children of Israel, in the land of Canaan.

God here appoints commissioners for the dividing of the land to them. The conquest of it is taken for granted, though as yet there was never a stroke struck towards it; here is no nomination of the generals and commanders in chief that should carry on the war; for they were to get the land in possession, *not by their own sword or bow, but by the power and favour of God*, and so confident must they be of victory and success while God fought for them, that the persons must now be named who should be intrusted with the dividing of the land, i. e. who should preside in casting of the lots, and determine controversies that might arise, and see that all was done fairly.

1. The principal commissioners, who were of the *Quorum*, were Eleazar and Joshua, *ver. 17.* typifying Christ, who, as priest and king, divides the heavenly Canaan to the spiritual Israel; yet as they were to go by lot, so Christ acknowledged the disposal must be by the will of the Father, *Matt. xx. 23.* compare *Eph. i. 11.*

2. Besides these, that there might be no suspicion of partiality, a prince of each tribe was appointed to inspect this matter, and to see that the tribe he served for was no way injured. Public affairs should be so managed, as not only to give right to all, but, if possible, to give satisfaction to all that they have right done them. It is a happiness to a land to have the princes of their people meet together, some out of every tribe, to concert the affairs that are of common concern; a constitution which is the abundant honour, ease, and safety, of the nation that is blessed with it.

Some observe, that the order of the tribes here very much differs from that in which they had hitherto, upon all occasions, been named; and agrees with the neighbourhood of their lots in the division of the land. Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin, the three first here named, lay close together: the inheritance of Dan lay next them on one side, and that of Ephraim and Manasseh on another side, Zebulun and Issachar lay abreast more northerly; and lastly, Asher and Naphtali most northward of all, as is easy to observe in looking over a map of Canaan: this (saith Bishop Patrick) is an evidence that Moses was guided by a divine Spirit in his writings. Known unto God are all his works beforehand, and what is new and surprising to us he presently forelaw, without any confusion or uncertainty.

C H A P. XXXV.

Orders having been given before for the dividing of the land of Canaan among the lay-tribes, (as I may call them) care is here taken for a competent provision for the clergy, the tribe of Levi, which ministered in holy things. 1. Forty-eight cities were to be assigned them, with their suburbs, some in every tribe, ver. 1—8. 2. Six cities out of those were to be for cities of refuge, for any man that killed another unawares, ver. 9—15. In the law concerning these observe, 1. In what cases sanctuary was not allowed, not in case of wilful murder, ver. 16—21. 2. In what cases it was allowed, ver. 20—24. 3. What was the law concerning those that took shelter in these cities of refuge, ver. 25—31.

1. **A**ND the LORD spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan, near Jericho, saying, 2. Command the children of Israel, that they give unto the Levites of the inheritance of their possession, cities to dwell in: and ye shall give also unto the Levites suburbs for the cities round about them. 3. And the cities shall they have to dwell in, and the suburbs of them shall be for their cattle, and for their goods, and for all their beasts. 4. And the suburbs of the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites, shall reach from the wall of the city and outward, a thousand cubits round about. 5. And ye shall measure from without the city on the east side two thousand cubits, and on the south side above two thousand cubits, and on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits; and the city shall be in the midst: this shall be to them the suburbs of the cities. 6. And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites, there shall be six cities for refuge, which ye shall appoint for the man-slayer, that ye may flee thither: and to them ye shall add forty and two cities. 7. So all the cities which ye shall give to the Levites, shall be forty and eight cities: them shall ye give with their suburbs. 8. And the cities which ye shall give, shall be of the possession of the children of Israel: from them that have many, ye shall give many; but from them that have few, ye shall give few. Every one shall give of his cities unto the Levites, according to his inheritance which he inheriteth.

The laws about the tithes and offerings had provided very plentifully for the maintenance of the Levites, but it was not to be thought, nor indeed was it for the public good, that when they came to Canaan they should all live about the tabernacle, as they had done in the wilderness, and therefore care must be taken to provide habitations for them; in which they might live comfortably and usefully. This is it which is here taken care of.

1. Cities were allotted them with their suburbs, *ver. 2.* they were not to have ground for tillage; they needed not to sow, or reap, or gather into barns, for their heavenly Father fed them with the tithe of the increase of other people's labours, that they might the more closely attend the study of the law, and might have more leisure to teach the people; for they were not to be entangled in the affairs of this life. (1.) Cities were allotted them that they might live near together, and converse with one another about the law, to their mutual edification; and that in doubtful cases they might consult one another, and in all cases strengthen one another's hands. (2.) These cities had suburbs annexed to them for their cattle, *ver. 3.* a thousand cubits from the wall was allowed them for out housing to keep their cattle in, *ver. 4, 5.* Thus was care taken that they should not only live, but live plentifully, and have all desirable conveniences about them, that they might not be looked upon with contempt by their neighbours.

2. These cities were to be assigned them out of the possessions of each tribe, *ver. 8.* (1.) That each tribe might thus make a grateful acknowledgment to God out of their real as well as out of their personal estates; for what was given to the Levites was accepted as given to the Lord; and thus their possessions were sanctified to them. (2.) That each tribe might have the benefit of the Levites dwelling among them, to teach them the good knowledge of the Lord; thus that light was diffused through all parts of the country and none left to sit in darkness. *Deut. xxxiii. 10. They shall teach Jacob thy judgments.* Jacob's curse on Levi's anger was, *I will scatter them in Israel*, *Gen. xlv. 7.* But that curse was turned into a blessing, and the Levites by being thus scattered were put into a capacity of doing so much the more good. It is a great mercy to a country to be replenished in all parts with faithful ministers. The number allotted them was forty-eight in all; four out of each of the twelve tribes one with another. Out of the united tribes of Simeon and Judah nine, out of Naphtali three, and four apiece out of all the rest, as appears *Josh. xxi.* Thus were they blessed with a good ministry, and that ministry with a comfortable maintenance, not only in tithes, but in glebe lands. And though the gospel is not so particular as the law was in this matter, yet it expressly proves that he that is taught in the word, should communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things, *Gal. vi. 6.*

9. ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 10. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come over Jordan, into the land of Canaan: 11. Then ye shall appoint your cities, to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares. 12. And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger, that the man-slayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment. 13. And of these cities which ye shall give, six cities shall ye have for refuge. 14. Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan, and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan, which shall be cities of refuge. 15. These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them: that every one that killeth any person unawares, may flee thither. 16. And if he smite him with an instrument of iron (so that he die) he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. 17. And if he smite him with throwing a stone, (wherewith he may die) and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. 18. Or if he smite him with an hand weapon of wood, (wherewith he may die) and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. 19. The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer; when he meeteth him he shall slay him. 20. But if he thrust him of hatred, or hurl at him by laying of wait, that he die: 21. Or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die, he that smote him shall surely be put to death, for he is a murderer: the revenger of blood shall slay the murderer when he meeteth him. 22. But if he thrust him suddenly without enmity, or have cast upon him any thing without laying of wait: 23. Or with any stone wherewith a man may die, seeing him not, and cast it upon him that he die, and was not his enemy, neither sought his harm: 24. Then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood, according to these judgments. 25. And the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled: and he shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil. 26. But if the slayer shall at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge whither he was fled; 27. And the revenger of blood find him without the borders of the city of his refuge, and the revenger of blood kill the slayer; he shall not be guilty of blood: 28. Because he should have remained in the city of his refuge, until the death of the high priest: but after the death of the high priest, the slayer shall return unto the land of his possession. 29. So these things shall be for a statute of judgment unto you, throughout your generations, in all your dwellings. 30. Whoso killeth any

any person, the murderer shall be put to death, by the mouth of witnesses; but one witness shall not testify against any person to *cause him* to die. 31. Moreover, ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death; but he shall be surely put to death. 32. And ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest. 33. So he shall not pollute the land wherein ye are; for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. 34. Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel.

We have here the orders given concerning the cities of refuge, fully annexed to what goes before, because they were all Levites' cities. In this part of the constitution there is a great deal both of good law and pure gospel.

(1.) Here is a great deal of good law, in the case of murder and manslaughter, a case which the laws of all nations have taken particular cognizance of. It is here enacted and provided, consonant to natural equity.

1. That wilful murder should be punished with death, and in that case no sanctuary should be allowed, no ransom taken, nor any commutation of the punishment accepted; the murderer shall surely be put to death, ver. 16. It is supposed to be done of *hatred*, ver. 20. or in *enmity*, ver. 21. upon a sudden provocation, (for our Saviour makes rash anger, as well as malice prepense, to be murder, *Matt.* vi. 21, 22.) whether the person be murdered with an instrument of iron, ver. 16. or wood, ver. 18. or with a stone thrown at him, ver. 27—20. Nay, if he smite him with his hand in enmity, and death ensue, it is murder, ver. 21. and it was an ancient law, consonant to the law of nature, that *who so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed*, Gen. ix. 6. Where wrong has been done, restitution must be made; and since the murderer cannot restore the life he has wrongfully taken away, his own must be exacted from him in lieu of it, not (as some have fancied) to satisfy the manes or ghost of the person slain, but to satisfy the law, and the justice of a nation, and to be warning to all others not to do likewise. It is here said, and it is well worthy the consideration of all princes and states, that *blood defileth* not only the conscience of the murderer, who is thereby proved *not to have eternal life abiding in him*, 1 Joh. iii. 15. but also the land in which it is shed; so very offensive is it to God and all good men, and the worst of nuisances. And it is added, that *the land cannot be cleansed*, from the blood of the murdered, but by the blood of the murderer, ver. 33. If murderers escape punishment from men, they that suffer them to escape will have a great deal to answer for, but God however will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment. Upon the same principle it is provided that no satisfaction should be taken for the life of a murderer, ver. 31. *If a man would give all the substance of the house to the judges*, to the country, or to the avenger of blood, to atone for his crime, it must *utterly be condemned*. The redemption of life is so precious, that it cannot be obtained by the *multitude of riches*, Psal. xlix. 7, 8. which perhaps may allude to this law. A rule of law comes in here, (which is a rule of our law in case of treason only) that no man shall be put to death upon the testimony of one witness, but it was necessary there should be two, ver. 30. this law is settled in all capital cases, *Deut.* xvii. 6.—xix. 15. and lastly, not only the prosecution, but the execution, of the murderer is committed to the next of kin, who as he was to be the redeemer of his kinsman's estate if it were mortgaged, so he was to be the avenger of his blood if he were murdered, ver. 19. *the avenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer*, if he were convicted by the notorious evidence of the fact, and he needed not to have recourse by a judicial process to the court of judgment. But if it were uncertain who the murderer was, and the proof doubtful, we cannot think that his bare suspicion or surmise, would empower him to do that which the judges themselves could not do, but upon the testimony of two witnesses. Only if the fact were plain, then the next heir of the person slain might himself, in a just indignation, slay the murderer wherever he met him. Some think, this must be understood to be after the lawful judgment of the magistrate, and so the Chaldee saith, he shall slay him, *when he shall be condemned unto him by judgment*; but it should seem by ver. 24. that the judges interposed only in a doubtful case; and that if the person on whom he took vengeance was indeed the murderer, and a wilful murderer, the avenger was innocent, (ver. 27.) only if it proved otherwise it was at his peril. Our law allows an appeal to be brought against a murderer, by the widow or next heir of the person murdered, yea, though the murderer have been acquitted upon an indictment; and if the murderer be found guilty upon that appeal, execution shall be awarded at the suit of the appellant, who may properly be called the avenger of blood.

2. But if the murder were not voluntary, nor done designedly, if it were *without enmity or lying in wait*, ver. 20. *not seeing him, or seeking his harm*, ver. 23. which our law calls chance-medley, or homicide *per infortunium*, in this case there were cities of refuge appointed for the man-slayer to flee to. By our law this incurs a forfeiture of goods, but a pardon is granted of course upon the special matter found.

Concerning the cities of refuge the law was,

1. That if a man killed another, in these cities he was safe, and under the protection of the law, till he had his trial *before the congregation*, i. e. before the judges in open court. If he neglected thus to surrender himself, it was at his peril, if the avenger of blood met him elsewhere, or overtook him loitering in his way to the city of refuge, and slew him, his blood was upon his own head, because he did not make use of the security God had provided for him.

2. If upon trial it was found to be wilful murder, the city of refuge should no longer be a protection to him, it was already determined, *Exod.* xxi. 14. *Thou shalt take him from mine altar that he may die*.

3. But if it were found to be by error or accident, and that the stroke was given without any design upon the life of the person slain, or any other; then the man-slayer should continue safe in the city of refuge, and the avenger of blood might not meddle with him, ver. 25. There he was to remain in banishment from his own house and patrimony, till the death of the high-priest; and if at any time he went out of that city, or the suburbs of it, he put himself out of the protection of this law; and the avenger of blood, if he met him, might slay him, ver. 26, 27, 28. Now, (1.) By the preservation of the life of the man-slayer, God would teach us, that men ought not to suffer for that which is rather their unhappiness than their crime, rather the act of providence than their own act, for *God delivered him into his hand*, *Exod.* xxi. 13. (2.) By the banishment of the man-slayer from his

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own city, and the confinement of him to the city of refuge, where he was in a manner a prisoner, God would teach us to conceive a dread and horror of the guilt of blood, to be very careful of life, and always afraid, lest by oversight, or negligence, we occasion the death of any. (3.) By the limiting of the time of the offender's banishment to the death of the high priest, an honour was put upon that sacred office. The high priest was to be looked upon as so great a blessing to his country, that when he died, their sorrow upon that occasion should swallow up all other resentments. The cities of refuge being all of them Levites' cities, and the high priest being the head of that tribe, and consequently having a peculiar dominion over those cities, those that were confined to them might properly be looked upon as his prisoners; and so his death must be their discharge; it was, as it were, at his suit that the delinquent was imprisoned, and therefore at his death it fell; *Actio moritur cum persona*. Ainsworth has another notion of it, That as the high priests, while they lived, by their service and sacrificing made atonement for sin, wherein they figured Christ's satisfaction; so at their death, those were released that had been exiled for casual murder, which typified redemption in Israel. 4. By the abandoning of the prisoner to the avenger of blood, in case he at any time went out of the limits of the city of refuge, they were taught to adhere to the methods infinite wisdom prescribed for their security. It was for the honour of a remedial law, that it should be so strictly observed. How can we expect to be saved, if we neglect the salvation, which is indeed a great salvation!

2. Here is a great deal of good gospel couched under the type and figure of the cities of refuge; and to them the apostle seems to allude, when he speaks of our flying for refuge to the hope set before us, *Heb.* vi. 18. and being found in Christ, *Phil.* iii. 9. We never read in the history of the Old Testament, of any use made of those cities of refuge, no more than of other such institutions, which yet no doubt were made use of upon the occasions intended; only we read of those who in dangerous cases took hold of the horns of the altar, 1 Kings i. 50.—ii. 58. for the altar, wherever that was, was, as it were, the capital city of refuge. But the law concerning these cities, was designed both to raise, and to encourage the expectations of those who looked for redemption in Israel, which should be to those who were convinced of sin, and in terror by reason of it, as the cities of refuge were to the man-slayer. Observe, (1.) There were several cities of refuge, and they were so appointed in several parts of the country, that the man-slayer wherever he dwelt in the land of Israel, might in half a day reach one or other of them; so though there is but one Christ a very present help, for *the word is nigh us*, and Christ in the word. (2.) The man-slayer was safe in any one of these cities; so in Christ believers that fly to him, and rest in him, are protected from the wrath of God and the curse of the law. *There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*, Rom. viii. 1. Who shall condemn those that are thus sheltered? (3.) They were all Levites cities; it was a kindness to the poor prisoners, that though he might not go up to the place where the ark was, yet he was in the midst of Levites who would teach him the good knowledge of the Lord, and instruct him how to improve the providence he was now under: It might also be expected, that the Levites would comfort and encourage him, and bid him welcome; so it is the work of gospel-ministers to bid poor sinners welcome to Christ, and to assist and counsel those that through grace are in him. (4.) Even strangers and sojourners, though they were not native Israelites, might take the benefit of these cities of refuge, ver. 15. So in Christ Jesus no difference is made between Greek and Jew, even the *sons of the stranger* that by faith fly to Christ shall be safe in him. (5.) Even the suburbs or borders of the city were a sufficient security to the offender, ver. 26, 27. So there is virtue, even in the hem of Christ's garment, for the healing and saving of poor sinners. If we cannot reach to a full assurance, we may comfort ourselves in a good hope through grace. (6.) The protection which the man-slayer found in the city of refuge, was not owing to the strength of its walls, or gates, or bars, but purely to the divine appointment; so it is the word of the gospel that gives souls safety in Christ; *for him hath God the father sealed*. (7.) If the offender were over caught straggling out of the borders of his city of refuge, or stealing home to his own house again, he lost the benefit of his protection, and lay exposed to the avenger of blood; so those that are in Christ must abide in Christ, for it is at their peril if they forsake him and wander from him. *Drawing back is to perdition*.

C H A P. XXXVI.

We have here in this chapter the determination of another question, that arose upon the case of the daughters of Zelophehad. God had appointed that they should inherit, chap. xxvii. 7. Now here, 1. An inconvenience is suggested, in case they should marry into any other tribe, ver. 1—4. 2. It is prevented by a divine appointment, that they should marry in their own tribe and family, ver. 5—7. and this is settled for a rule in like cases, ver. 8, 9. and they did marry accordingly to some of their own relations, ver. 10—12. and with this the book concludes, ver. 13.

1. **A**ND the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, came near, and spake before Moses, and before the princes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel. 2. And they said, The LORD commanded my lord to give the land for an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel: and my lord was commanded by the LORD to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother, unto his daughters. 3. And if they be married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel: then shall their inheritance be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and shall be put to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall it be taken from the lot of our inheritance. 4. And when the jubilee of the children of Israel shall be, then shall their inheritance be put unto the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall their inheritance be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers.

We have here the humble address, which the heads of the tribe of Manasseh made to Moses and the princes, on occasion of the order lately made

concerning the daughters of Zelophehad. The family they belonged to was part of that half of the tribe of Manasseh, which was yet to have their lot within Jordan, not that half that was already settled, and yet they speak of the land of their possession, and the inheritance of their fathers, with as great assurance, as if they had it already in their hands, knowing whom they had trusted. In their appeal observe,

1. They fairly recite the former order made in this case, and do not move to have that set aside, but are very willing to acquiesce in it, *ver. 2. The Lord commanded to give the inheritance of Zelophehad to his daughters*; and they are very well pleased it should be so, none of them knowing but that hereafter it might be the case of their own families, and then their daughters would have the benefit of this law.

2. They represent the inconvenience which might possibly follow hereupon, if the daughters of Zelophehad should see cause to marry into any other tribes, *ver. 3.* And it is likely this was not a bare surmise, or supposition, but that they knew at this time great court was made to them by some young gentlemen of their tribes, because they were heiresses, that they might get footing in this tribe, and so enlarge their own inheritance. This truly is often aimed at more than it should be in making marriages; not the meanness of the person, but the convenience of the estate, to *lay house to house, and field to field.* Wisdom indeed is good with an inheritance, but what is an inheritance good for in that relation without wisdom? But here we may presume the personal merit of these daughters, recommended them as well as their fortunes; however the heads of their tribe foresaw the mischief that would follow, and brought the case to Moses that he might consult the oracle of God concerning it. The difficulty they start God could have obviated, and provided against in the former order given in this case, but to teach us, that we must in our affairs, not only attend God's providence, but make use of our own prudence, God did not direct in it, till they themselves that were concerned, wisely foresaw the inconvenience, and piously addressed to Moses for a rule in it. For though they were chief fathers in their families, and might have assumed a power to over-rule these daughters of Zelophehad, in disposing of themselves, especially their father being dead, and the common interest of their tribe being concerned in it, yet they chose rather to refer themselves to Moses, and it issued well. We should not covet to be judges in our own case, for it is hard to be so, and not be partial. It is easier in many cases to take good advice than to give it, a satisfaction to be under direction.

Two things they aimed at in their representation:

1. To preserve the divine appointment of inheritances. They urge the command, *ver. 2.* that the land should be given by lot to the respective tribes, and urge that it would break in upon the divine appointment, if such a considerable part of the lot of Manasseh should, by their marriage, be transferred to any other tribe; for the issue would be denominated from the father's tribe, not the mother's. This indeed would not lessen the lot of the particular persons of that tribe, they would have their own still, but it would lessen the lot of the tribe in general, and render it less strong and considerable; they therefore thought themselves concerned for the reputation of their tribe; and perhaps were the more zealous for it, because it was already very much weakened by the sitting down of the one half of it on this side Jordan.

2. To prevent contests and quarrels among posterity. If those of other tribes should come among them, perhaps it might occasion some contests: they would be apt to give and receive disturbance, and their title might in process of time come to be questioned; and how great a matter would this fire kindled! It is the wisdom and duty of those that have estates in the world to settle them, and dispose of them, so as that no strife and contention arise about them among posterity.

5. And Moses commanded the children of Israel, according to the word of the LORD, saying, The tribes of the sons of Joseph hath said well. 6. This is the thing which the LORD doth command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them marry to whom they think best; only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry. 7. So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe; for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. 8. And every daughter that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel, shall

be wife unto one of the family of the tribe of her father, that the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his fathers. 9. Neither shall the inheritance remove from one tribe to another tribe: but every one of the tribes of the children of Israel shall keep himself to his own inheritance. 10. Even as the LORD commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad. 11. For Mahlah, Tirzah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married unto their fathers brother's sons. 12. And they were married into the families of the sons of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father. 13. These are the commandments and the judgments which the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses, unto the children of Israel in the plains of Moab, by Jordan near Jericho.

Here is, 1. The matter settled by express order from God between the daughters of Zelophehad, and the rest of the tribe of Manasseh. The petition is assented to, and care taken to prevent the inconvenience feared: *ver. 5. The tribe of the sons of Joseph hath said well.* Thus those that consult the oracles of God, concerning the making of their heavenly inheritance sure, shall not only be directed what to do, but their enquiries shall be graciously accepted, and they shall have not only their *well done* but their *well said*, good and faithful servant. Now the matter is thus accommodated; their heiresses must be obliged to marry, not only within their own tribe of Manasseh, but within the particular family of the Hephertites to which they did belong. (1.) They are not determined to any particular persons, there was choice enough in the family of their father, *Let them marry to whom they think best.* As children must preserve the authority of their parents, and not marry against their mind; so parents must consult the affections of their children in disposing of them, and not compel them to marry such as they cannot love. Forced marriages are not likely to prove well. (2.) Yet they are confined to their own relations, that their inheritance might not go to another family. God would have them know that the land being to be divided by lot, the disposal whereof was of the Lord, they could not err, and therefore should not alter his appointment. The inheritances must not remove from tribe to tribe, *ver. 7.* lest there should be confusion among them, their estates entangled, and their genealogies perplexed. God would not have one tribe to be enriched, by the straitening and impoverishing of another, since they were all alike the seed of Abraham his friend.

2. The law in this particular case made perpetual, and to be observed whenever hereafter the like case should happen, *ver. 8.* those that were not heiresses might marry into what tribe they pleased (though we may suppose that ordinarily they kept within their own tribe) but those that were, must either quit their claim to their inheritance, or marry one of their own family, that each of the tribe might keep themselves to their own inheritance, and one tribe might not encroach upon another, but throughout their generations there might remain immovable the ancient landmarks set, not by their fathers, but by the God of their fathers.

3. The submission of the daughters of Zelophehad to this appointment. How could they but marry well and to their satisfaction, when God himself directed them? they married their father's brothers sons, *ver. 10, 11, 12.* By this it appears, (1.) That the marriage of cousin-germans is not in itself unlawful, not within the degrees prohibited, for then God would not have countenanced these marriages. But, (1.) That ordinarily it is not advisable for if there had not been a particular reason for it, (which cannot hold in any case now, inheritances being not disposed of as then by the special designation of Heaven) they would not have married such near relations. The world is wide, and he that walks uprightly will endeavour to walk surely.

Lastly, The conclusion of this whole book, referring to the latter part of it, *these are the judgments which the Lord commanded in the plains of Moab, ver. 13.* these foregoing ever since *chap. xxvi.* most of which related to their settlement in Canaan, into which they were now entering. Whatever new condition God is by his providence bringing us into, we must beg of him to teach us the duty of it, and to enable us to do it, that we may do the work of the day in its day, of the place in its place.



AN
E X P O S I T I O N,
WITH
P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,

Upon the FIFTH Book of MOSES, called
DEUTERONOMY.

This book is a repetition of very much both of the history and of the laws contained in the three foregoing books; which repetition Moses delivered to Israel both by word of mouth, that it might affect, and by writing, that it might abide; a little before his death. There is no new history in it but that of the death of Moses in the last chapter, nor any new revelation to Moses for ought appears, and therefore the stile here is not as before, *The Lord spake unto Moses, saying*. But the former laws are repeated and commented upon, explained, and enlarged, and some particular precepts added to them, with copious reasonings for the enforcing of them; in this Moses was divinely inspired and assisted, so that this is as truly the word of the Lord by Moses as that which was spoken to him with an audible voice, *out of the tabernacle of the congregation*, Lev. i. 1. The Greek interpreters call it *Deuteronomy*, which signifies the *second law*, or, a *second edition of the law*, not with amendments, for there needed none, but with additions, for the farther direction of the people in divers cases not mentioned before.—Now, (1.) It was much for the honour of the divine law, that it should be thus repeated; how great were the things of that law, which was thus inculcated, and how inexcusable would they be by whom they were counted as a *strange thing*! Hof. viii. 12. (2.) There might be a particular reason for the repeating of it now; the men of that generation to whom the law was first given were all dead, and anew generation was sprung up, to whom God would have it repeated by Moses himself, that if possible it might make a lasting impression upon them. Now they were just going to take possession of the land of Canaan, Moses must read the articles of agreement to them, that they might know upon what terms and conditions they were to hold and enjoy that land, and might understand that they were upon their good behaviour in it. (3.) It would be of great use to the people to have those parts of the law thus gathered up, and put together, which did more immediately concern them, and their practice; for the laws which concerned the priests and Levites, and the execution of their offices, are not repeated; it was enough for them that they were once delivered; but in compassion to the infirmities of the people, the laws of more common concern are delivered a second time. *Precept must be upon precept and line upon line*, Isa. xxviii. 10. The great and needful truths of the gospel should be often pressed upon people by the ministers of Christ. *To write the same things* (saith Paul, *Phil.* iii. 1.) *to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe*. What God has spoken once we have need to hear twice, to hear many times, and it is well if, after all, it be duly perceived and regarded.—Three ways this book of Deuteronomy was magnified and made honourable. (1.) The king was to write a copy of it with his own hand, and to read therein all the days of his life, *chap.* xvii. 18. (2.) It was to be written upon great stones plaistered at their passing over Jordan, *chap.* xxvii. 1—3. (3.) It was to be read publicly every seventh year, at the feast of tabernacles, by the priest in the audience of all Israel, *chap.* xxxi. 9. The Gospel is a kind of Deuteronomy, a second law, a remedial law, a spiritual law, a law of faith; by it we are under the law to Christ, and it is a law that *makes the comers thereunto perfect*.—This book of Deuteronomy begins with a brief rehearsal of the most remarkable events that had befallen them since they came from mount Sinai; at the fourth chapter comes a most pathetic exhortation to obedience; at the twelfth chapter, and so on to the twenty seventh, are repeated many particular laws, which are enforced, *chap.* xxvii. and xxviii. with promises and threatenings, blessings and curses, formed into a covenant, *chap.* xxix. and xxx. care taken to perpetuate the remembrance of these things among them, *chap.* xxxi. particularly by a song, *chap.* xxxii. and so Moses concludes with a blessing, *chap.* xxxiii.—All this was delivered by Moses to Israel in the last month of his life. The whole book contains the history but of two months; compare *Judg.* i. 3. with *Josh.* iv. 19. the latter of which was the thirty days of Israel's mourning for Moses: see how busy that great and good man was to do good, when he knew that his time was short; how quick his motion when he drew near his rest. Thus we have more recorded of what our blessed Saviour said and did in the last week of his life, than in any other. The last words of eminent persons do, or should make deep impressions.—Observe, for the honour of this book, that when our Saviour would answer the Devil's temptations with, *It is written*, he fetched all his quotations out of this book, *Matt.* iv. 4—10.

C H A P. I.

The first part of Moses's farewell sermon to Israel begins with this chapter, and is continued to the latter end of the fourth chapter. In the five first verses of this chapter we have the date of the sermon, the place where it was preached, ver. 1, 2—3. and the time when, ver. 3, 4. The narrative in this chapter reminds them, 1. Of the promise God made them of the land of Canaan, ver. 6—8. 2. Of the provision made of judges for them, ver. 9—18. 3. Of their unbelief and murmuring upon the report of the spies, ver. 19—33. 4. Of the sentence passed upon them for it, and the ratification of that sentence, ver. 34—46.

1. **THESE** be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel, on this side Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizabab. 2. *(There are eleven days journey from Horeb by the way of mount Seir, unto Kadesh-barnea.)* 3. And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment unto them; 4. After he had slain Sihon, the king of the Amorites, which dwelt in Heshbon, and Og, the king of Bashan, which dwelt at Astaroth in Edrei. 5. On this side Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare this law, saying, 6. The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount: 7. Turn you, and take your journey: and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places

nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea-side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates. 8. Behold I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them, and to their seed after them.

We have here, 1. The date of this sermon which Moses preached to the people of Israel. A great auditory, no question, he had as many as could crowd within hearing, and particularly all the elders and officers, the representatives of the people; and probably, it was on the sabbath day that he delivered this to them. (1.) The place where they were now encamped was in the plain, in the land of Moab, (ver. 1—5.) where they were just ready to enter Canaan; and engage in a war with the Canaanites, yet he discourseth not to them concerning military affairs, the arts and stratagems of war, but concerning their duty to God: for if they kept themselves in his fear and labour, he would secure to them the conquest of the land; their religion would be their best policy. (2.) The time was near the end of the fortieth year since they came out of Egypt. So long God had borne their manners, and they had born their own iniquity, (Numb. xiv. 34.) and now a new and more pleasant scene was to be introduced, as a token for good. Moses repeats the law to them. Thus after God's controversy with them for the golden calf, the first and surest sign of God's being reconciled to them, was the renewing of the tables. There is no better evidence and earnestness of God's favour than his putting his law in our hearts, *Psal.* cxlvii. 19, 20.

2. The discourse itself. In general, Moses spake unto them *all that the Lord had given him in commandment*, ver. 3. Which intimates not only, that what he now delivered was for substance the same with what had formerly been commanded. But it was what God now commanded him to repeat. He gave them this rehearsal and exhortation purely by divine direction: God appointed him to leave this legacy to the Church.

He begins his narrative with their removal from mount Sinai, ver. 6. and relates here, (1.) The orders God gave them to decamp, and proceed in their march, ver. 6, 7. *Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount, that*

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was the mount that *burned with fire*, Heb. xii. 18. and *gendered to bondage*, Gal. iv. 24. Thither God brought them to humble them, and by the terrors of the law, to prepare them for the land of promise. There he kept them about a year, and then told them they had *dwelt long enough* there, they must go forward. Though God bring his people into trouble and affliction, into spiritual trouble and affliction of mind, he knows when they have *dwelt long enough* in it, and will certainly find a time, the fittest time, to advance them from the terrors of the *spirit of bondage*, to the comforts of the *spirit of adoption*. See Rom. viii. 15. (2.) The prospect he gave them of a happy settlement in Canaan presently. *Go to the land of the Canaanites*, ver. 7. enter and take possession, it is all your own. *Behold, I have set the land before you*, ver. 8. But when God command us to go forward in our Christian course, he sets the heavenly Canaan before us for our encouragement.

9. ¶ And I spake unto you at that time, saying I am not able to bear you myself alone: 10. The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and behold ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude. 11. (The LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you as he hath promised you.) 12. How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife? 13. Take you wife men and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you. 14. And he answered me and said, The thing which thou hast spoken, is good for us to do. 15. So I took the chief of your tribes, wife men, and known, and make them head over you, captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captain over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes. 16. And I charged your judges at that time, saying, *Hear the causes* between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. 17. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment, but you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it. 18. And I commanded you at that time all the things which ye should do.

Moses here minds them of the happy constitution of their government, which was such as might make them all safe and easy, if it were not their own fault. When good laws were given them, good men were entrusted with the execution of them; which as it was an instance of God's goodness to them, so it was of the care of Moses concerning them; and it should seem, he mentions it here, to recommend himself to them as a man that sincerely sought their welfare, and so to make way for what he was about to say to them, wherein he aimed at nothing but their good.

In this part of his narrative he insinuates to them, 1. That he greatly rejoiced in the increase of their numbers. He owns the accomplishment of God's promise to Abraham, ver. 10. *You are as the stars of heaven for multitude*, and prays for the farther accomplishment of it, ver. 11. *God make you a thousand times more*. This prayer comes in a parenthesis, and a good prayer prudently put in cannot be impertinent, in any discourse of divine things; nor will a pious ejaculations break the coherence, but rather strengthen and adorn it. But how greatly are his desires enlarged, when he prays that they may be made a thousand times more than they were. We are not straitened in the power and goodness of God, why should we be straitened in our own faith and hope, which ought to be as large as the promise; and larger it need not be. It is from the promise that Moses here takes the measure of his prayer, *The Lord bless you as he hath promised you*. And why might he not hope that they might become a thousand times more than they were now, when they were now ten thousand times more than they were when they came down into Egypt, about 250 years ago? Observe, When they were under the government of Pharaoh the increase of their numbers was envied, and complained of as a grievance, Exod. i. 9. but now under the government of Moses it was rejoiced in, and prayed for as a blessing: the comparing of which might give them occasion to reflect with shame upon their own folly, when they had talked of making a captain and returning to Egypt.

2. That he was not ambitious of monopolizing the honour of the government, and ruling them himself alone, as an absolute monarch, ver. 9. Though he was a man as well worthy of that honour, and as well qualified for the business, as ever any man was, yet he was desirous that others might be taken in as assistants to him in the business, and consequently sharers with him in the honour. *I cannot myself alone bear the burden*, ver. 12. Magistracy is a burden. Moses himself though so eminently gifted for it, found it lay heavy on his shoulders: nay, the best magistrates complain most of the burden, and are most desirous of help, and most afraid of undertaking more than they can perform.

3. That he was not desirous to prefer his own creatures, or such as should underhand have a dependence upon him, for he leaves it to the people to choose their judges, to whom he would grant commissions, not *durante bene placito*, to be turned out when he pleased, but *quam diu se bene gesserint*, to continue as long as they approved themselves faithful, ver. 13. *Take ye wife men, that are known to be so among your tribes, and I will make them rulers*. Thus the apostles directed the multitude to choose overseers of the poor, and then they ordained them, Acts vi. 3. He directs them to take wife men and understanding, whose personal merit would recommend them; the rise and original of this nation was so late, that none of them could pretend to antiquity of race, and nobility of birth, above their brethren; and they having all newly come out of slavery in Egypt, it is probable one family was not much richer than another; so that their choice must be directed purely by the qualifications of wisdom, experience and integrity. Choose such (saith Moses) whose praise is in your tribes, and with all my heart I will make them rulers. We must not grudge that God's work be done by other hands than ours, provided it be done by good hands.

4. That he was in this matter very willing to please the people, and though he did not in any thing aim at their applause, yet in a thing of this nature he would not act without their approbation. And they agreed to the proposal, ver. 14. *The thing which thou hast spoken is good*. This he mentions to aggravate the sin of their mutinies and discontents after this, that

the government they quarreled with, was what they themselves had consented to; Moses would have pleased them, if they would have been pleased.

2. That he aimed to edify them, as well as to gratify them; for, (1.) He appointed men of good characters, ver. 15. *wise men, and men known*, men that would be faithful to their trust, and to the public interest. (2.) He gave them a good charge, ver. 16, 17. Those that are advanced to honour, must know that they are charged with business, and must give account another day of their charge. (1.) He chargeth them to be diligent and patient. *Hear the causes*. Hear both sides, hear them fully, hear them carefully, for nature hath provided us with two ears, and he that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame to him. The ear of the learned is necessary to the tongue of the learned, Isa. l. 4. (2.) To be just and impartial, judge righteously. Judgment must be given according to the merits of the cause, without regard to the quality of the parties. The natives must not be suffered to abuse the strangers, no more than the strangers to insult the natives or to encroach upon them: the great must not be suffered to oppress the small, nor to crush them, no more than the small to rob the great, or to affront them. No faces must be known in judgment, but unbribed, unbiassed equity must always pass sentence. (3.) To be resolute and courageous. *You shall not be afraid of the face of man*. Be not over-awed to do an ill thing, either by the clamours of the crowd, or by the menaces of those that have power in their hands. And he gives them a good reason to enforce this charge, *For the judgment is God's*. You are God's vicegerents, you act for him, and therefore must act like him: you are his representatives, but if you judge unrighteously you misrepresent him. The judgment is his, and therefore he will protect you in doing right, and will certainly call you to account if you do wrong. And lastly, He allows them to bring all difficult cases to him, which he would always be ready to hear and determine, and to make both the judges and the people easy. *Happy art thou, O Israel, in such a prince as Moses was*.

19. ¶ And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the LORD our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea. 20. And I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the LORD our God doth give unto us. 21. Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: Go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee, fear not, neither be discouraged. 22. ¶ And ye came near unto me, every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come. 23. And the saying pleased me well: and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe. 24. And they turned and went up into the mountain, and came unto the valley of Eshcol, and searched it out. 25. And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, *It is a good land which the LORD our God doth give us*. 26. Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God. 27. And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. 28. Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is greater and taller than we, the cities are great and walled up to heaven, and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there. 29. Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them, 30. The LORD your God, which goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes: 31. And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the LORD thy God bare thee as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that he went, until he came into this place. 32. Yet in this thing ye did not believe the LORD your God, 33. Who went into the way before you to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night to shew you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day. 34. And the LORD heard the voice of your words, and was wrath, and sware, saying, 35. Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I sware to give unto your fathers; 36. Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the LORD. 37. Also the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither. 38. But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: Encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it. 39. Moreover, your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it. 40. But as for you, turn ye, and take your journey into the wilderness, by the way of the Red sea. 41. Then ye answered and said unto me, We have sinned against the LORD, we will go up and fight, according to all that the LORD our God commanded us.

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And when he had girded on every man his weapons of war, ye were ready to go up into the hill. 42. And the LORD said unto me, Say unto them, Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you: lest ye be smitten before your enemies. 43. So I spake unto you, and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD, and went presumptuously up into the hill. 44. And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chafed you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah. 45. And ye returned and wept before the LORD: but the LORD would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you. 46. So ye abode in Kadesh many days, according unto the days that ye abode there.

Moses here makes a large rehearsal of that fatal turn which was given them by their own sin, and God's wrath, when from the very borders of Canaan, the honour of conquering it, and the pleasure of possessing it, that whole generation was hurried back into the wilderness, and their carcasses, fell there. It was a memorable story: we read it in *Numb. xiii.* and *xiv.* but divers circumstances are found here which are not related there.

1. He minds them of their march from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea, (*ver. 19.*) through that great and terrible wilderness. This he takes notice of, (1.) To make them sensible of the great goodness of God to them, in guiding them through so great a wilderness, and protecting them from the mischiefs they were surrounded with in such a terrible wilderness. The remembrance of our dangers should make us thankful for our deliverances. (2.) To aggravate the folly of those, who in their discontent would go back again to Egypt through this wilderness, though they had forfeited, and had no reason to expect the divine conduct, in such a retrograde motion.

2. He shews them how fair they stood for Canaan at that time, *ver. 20, 21.* He told them with triumph, the land is *set before you, go up, and possess it.* He lets them see how near they were to a happy settlement, when they put a bar in their own door, that their sin might appear the more exceeding sinful, it will aggravate the eternal ruin of hypocrites, that they were not far from the kingdom of God, and yet came short, *Mark xii. 34.*

3. He lays the blame of sending the spies upon them, which did not appear in *Numbers*; there it is said, *chap. xiii. 1.* that the Lord directed the sending of them, but here we find that the people first desired it, and God in permitting it, gave them up to their own counsels, *ver. 22. Ye said, we will send them before us.* Moses had given them God's word, *ver. 20, 21.* But they could not find in their hearts to rely upon that; human policy goes farther with them than divine wisdom, and they will needs light a candle to the sun. As if it were not enough that they were sure of a God before them, they must send men before them.

4. He repeats the report which the spies brought of the goodness of the land they were sent to survey, *ver. 24, 25.* The blessings God has promised are truly valuable and desirable, even the unbelievers themselves being judges: never any looked into the holy land, but they must own it a good land. Yet they represented the difficulties of conquering it as insuperable; *ver. 28.* as if it were in vain to think of attacking them either by battle, for the people are taller than we, or by siege, for the cities were walled up to heaven: an hyperbole they made use of to serve their ill purpose, which was to dishearten the people, and perhaps therein they intended to reflect on the God of heaven himself, as if they were able to defy him, like the Babel builders, the top of whose tower must reach to heaven, *Gen. xi. 4.* Those places only are walled up to heaven that are compassed with God's favour as with a shield.

5. He tells them what pains he took with them to encourage them, when their brethren had said so much to discourage them, *ver. 29. Then I said unto you, Dread not.* Moses suggested enough to have stilled the tumult, and to have kept them with their faces towards Canaan. He assured them that God was present with them, and president among them, and would certainly fight for them, *ver. 30.* And for proof of his power over their enemies, he refers them to what they had seen done in Egypt, where their enemies had all possible advantages against them, and yet were humbled and forced to yield, *ver. 30.* And for proof of God's good-will to them, and the real kindness he intended them, he refers them to what they had seen in the wilderness, *ver. 31—33.* through which they had been guided by the eye of divine wisdom, in a pillar of cloud and fire, which directed both their motions, and their rests; and had been carried in the arms of divine grace, with as much care and tenderness as ever any child was borne in the arms of a nursing father. And was there any room left to distrust this God? Or were they not the most ungrateful people in the world, who, after such sensible proofs of the divine goodness, *hardened their hearts in the day of temptation?* Moses had complained once, that God had charged him to carry this people as the nursing father doth the suckling child, *Numb. xi. 12.* But here he owns it was God that so carried them, and perhaps this is alluded to in *Acts xiii. 18.* where he is said to bear them, or to suffer their manners.

6. He chargeth them with the sin they were guilty of upon this occasion. Though those he was now speaking to were a new generation, yet he lays it upon them, *ye rebelled, and ye murmured*; for many of these were then in being though under twenty years old, and perhaps were engaged in the riot; and the rest inherited their father's vices, and smarted for them. Observe what he lays to their charge. (1.) Disobedience and rebellion against God's law. *Ye would not go up, but rebelled, ver. 26.* The rejecting of God's favours is really a rebelling against his authority. (2.) Invidious reflections upon God's goodness. They basely suggested, *ver. 27. Because the Lord hated us he brought us out of Egypt.* What could have been said more absurd and disingenuous, and more reproachful to God? (3.) An unbelieving heart at the bottom of all this, *ver. 32. Ye did not believe the Lord your God.* All our disobedience to God's laws, and distrust of his power and goodness, flows from a disbelief of his word. A sad pass it is come to with us, when the God of eternal truth cannot be believed!

7. He repeats the sentence passed upon them for this sin, which now they had seen the execution of. (1.) They were all condemned to die in the wilderness, and none of them must be suffered to enter Canaan. except Caleb and Joshua, *ver. 34, 35, 36.* So long they must continue their wanderings in the wilderness that most of them would drop off of course, and the youngest of them should be cut off. Thus they could not enter in because of unbelief. It was not the breach of any of the commands of the law that shut them out of Canaan, no, not the golden calf, but their disbelief of that promise which was typical of gospel-grace, to signify, that no sin will ruin us, but unbelief, which is a sin against the remedy. (2.) Moses himself afterwards fell under God's displeasure, for a hasty word they provoked him to speak, *ver. 37. The Lord was angry with me for your sakes.* Because all

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the old stock must go off, Moses himself must not stay behind. Their unbelief let death into the camp, and when he is entered, even Moses falls with his commission. (3.) Yet here is mercy mixed with this wrath. (1.) That though Moses might not bring them into Canaan, Joshua should, *ver. 38. Encourage him,* for he would be discouraged from taking up a government, which he saw Moses himself fall under the weight of; but let him be assured he will accomplish that for which he is raised up, *he shall cause Israel to inherit it.* Thus what the law could not do in that it was weak, Jesus, our Joshua, doth by bringing in the better hope. (2.) That though this generation should not enter Canaan, the next should, *ver. 39.* As they had been chosen for their fathers' sakes, so their children might justly have been rejected for their sakes. But *mercy rejoiceth against judgment.*

8. He minds them of their foolish and fruitless attempt to get this sentence reversed, when it was too late. (1.) They tried it by their reformation, in this particular; whereas they had refused to go up against the Canaanites, now they would go up, aye, that they would, in all haste, and they girded on their weapons of war for that purpose, *ver. 41.* thus when the door is shut, and the day of grace is over, there will be found those that stand without and knock. But this, which looked like a reformation, proved but a farther rebellion, God, by Moses, prohibited the attempt, *ver. 42. Yet they went presumptuously up to the hill, ver. 43.* acting now in contempt of the threatening, as before in contempt of the promise, as if they were governed by a spirit of contradiction, and it sped accordingly, *ver. 44.* they were chafed and destroyed, and by this defeat which they suffered, when they had provoked God to leave them, they were taught what success they might have had if they had kept themselves in his love. (2.) They tried by their prayers and tears to get the sentence reversed, *ver. 45. They returned and wept before the Lord.* While they were fretting and quarrelling it is said, *Numb. xiv. 1. They wept that night*; those were tears of rebellion against God, these were tears of repentance and humiliation before God. Note, Tears of discontent must be wept over again; the sorrow of the world worketh death, and is to be repented of; it is not so with godly sorrow, that will end in joy. But their weeping was all to no purpose, *The Lord would not hearken to your voice,* because ye would not hearken to his; the decree was gone forth, and, like Esau, they found no place of repentance, though they sought it carefully with tears.

C H A P. II.

Moses in this chapter proceeds in the rehearsal of God's providences concerning Israel in their way to Canaan, yet preserves not the record of any thing that happened during their tedious march back to the Red-sea, in which they wore out almost 38 years, but passeth that over in silence, as a dark time; and makes his narrative to begin again when they faced about towards Canaan, *ver. 1—3.* and drew towards the countries that were inhabited, concerning which God here gives them direction. 1. What nations they must not give any disturbance to. (1.) Not to the Edomites, *ver. 5—8.* (2.) Not to the Moabites, *ver. 9.* of the antiquities of whose country, with that of the Edomites, he gives some account, *ver. 10—12.* And here comes in an account of their passing the river Sered, *ver. 13—16.* (3.) Not to the Ammonites, of whose country here is some account given, *ver. 17—23.* 2. What nations they should attack and conquer. They must begin with Sihon, king of the Amorites, *ver. 24, 26.* And accordingly, (1.) They had a fair occasion of quarrelling with him, *ver. 26—32.* (2.) God gave them a complete victory over him, *ver. 33—37.*

1. **T**HEN we turned, and took our journey into the wilderness, by the way of the Red-sea, as the LORD spake unto me: and we compassed mount Seir many days. 2. And the LORD spake unto me, saying, 3. Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward. 4. And command thou the people, saying, Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir, and they shall be afraid of you: take ye good heed unto yourselves therefore. 5. Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth, because I have given mount Seir unto Esau, for a possession. 6. Ye shall buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat; and ye shall also buy water of them for money, that ye may drink. 7. For the LORD thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand: he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the LORD thy God hath been with thee, thou hast lacked nothing.

Here is, 1. A short account of the long stay of Israel in the wilderness: *I've compassed mount Seir many days, ver. 1.* Near 38 years they wandered in the deserts of Seir, probably in some of their rests they staid several years, and never stirred; God by this not only chastised them for their murmuring and unbelief, but, (1.) Prepared them for Canaan, but humbling them for sin, teaching them to mortify their lusts, to follow God, and to comfort themselves in him. It is a work of time to make souls meet for heaven, and it must be done by a long train of exercises. (2.) He prepared the Canaanites for destruction, all this time the measure of their iniquity was in the filling, and though it might have been improved by them as a space to repent, it was abused by them to the hardening of their hearts. Now the host of Israel was once repulsed, and after that was so long entangled, and seemingly lost in the wilderness, they were secure, and thought the danger was over from that quarter, which would make the next attempt of Israel upon them the more dreadful.

2. Orders given them to turn towards Canaan; Though God contend long, he will not contend for ever. Though Israel may be long kept waiting for deliverance and enlargement, it will come at last; *The vision is for an appointed time, and at the end of it shall speak and not lie.*

3. A charge given them not to annoy the Edomites; 1. They must not offer any hostility to them as enemies, *ver. 4, 5. Meddle not with them.* (1.) They must not improve the advantage they had against them, by the fright they would be put into upon Israel's approach. *They shall be afraid of you,* knowing your strength and number, and the power of God engaged for you, but do you think that their fears making them an easy prey, you

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may

may therefore prey upon them: no, take heed to yourselves. There is need of great caution and a strict government of our own spirits, to keep ourselves from injuring those we have an advantage against. Or, this caution is given to the princes; they must not only not meddle with the Edomites themselves, but not permit any of their soldiers to meddle with them. (2.) They must not avenge upon the Edomites the affront they gave them in refusing them passage through their country, *Numb. xx. 21.* Thus before God brought Israel to destroy their enemies in Canaan, he taught them to forgive their enemies in Edom. (3.) They must not expect to have any part of their land given them for a possession: mount Seir was already settled upon the Edomites, and they must not, under pretence of God's covenant and conduct, think to seize for themselves all they could lay hands on. Dominion is not founded in grace. God's Israel shall be well placed, but must not expect to be placed alone in the midst of the earth, *Isa. v. 8.*

4. They must trade with them as neighbours; buy meat and water of them, and pay for what they bought, *ver. 6.* religion must never be made a cloak for injustice. The reason given, *ver. 7.* is, because God hath blessed thee, and hitherto thou hast lacked nothing; and therefore, (1.) Thou needest not beg; scorn to be beholden to Edomites, when thou hast a God all-sufficient to depend upon. Thou hast wherewithal to pay for what thou callest for, thanks to the divine blessing, use therefore what thou hast, use it cheerfully and do not sponge upon the Edomites. (2.) Therefore thou must not steal. Thou hast experienced the care of the divine providence concerning thee, in confidence of which for the future, and in a firm belief of its all-sufficiency, never use any indirect methods for thy supply. Live by thy faith, and not by thy sword.

8. And when we passed by from our brethren the children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir, through the way of the plain from Elath, and from Ezion-gaber, we turned and passed by the way of the wilderness of Moab. 9. And the LORD said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land for a possession, because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession. 10. The Emims dwelt therein in times past, a people great and many, and tall as the Anakims: 11. Which also were accounted giants, as the Anakims, but the Moabites call them Emims. 12. The Horims also dwelt in Seir before-time, but the children of Esau succeeded them, when they had destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their stead; as Israel did unto the land of his possession, which the LORD gave unto them. 13. Now rise up, said I, and get you over the brook Zered: and we went over the brook Zered. 14. And the space in which we came from Kadesh-barnea, until we were come over the brook Zered, was thirty and eight years, until all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as the LORD swore unto them. 15. For indeed the hand of the LORD was against them, to destroy them from among the host, until they were consumed. 16. ¶ So it came to pass, when all the men of war were consumed and dead from among the people, 17. That the LORD spake unto me, saying, 18. Thou art to pass over through Ar, the coast of Moab, this day. 19. And when thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon any possession, because I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession. 20. ¶ That also was accounted a land of giants; giants dwelt therein in old time, and the Ammonites called them Zamzummims; 21. A people great and many, and tall as the Anakims, but the LORD destroyed them before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead: 22. As he did to the children of Esau which dwelt in Seir, when he destroyed the Horims from before them, and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead even unto this day. 23. And the Avims which dwelt in Hazerim, even unto Azzah, the Caphtorims, which came forth out of Caphtor, destroyed them and dwelt in their stead.)

It is observable here that Moses speaking of the Edomites, *ver. 8.* calls them *our brethren, the children of Esau*; though they had been unkind to Israel, in refusing them a peaceable passage through their country, yet he calls them brethren: for though our relations fail in their duty to us, we must retain a sense of the relation, and not be wanting in our duty to them, as there is occasion.

Now in these verses we have,

1. The account which Moses gives of the original of the nations which he had here occasion to speak of; the Moabites, Edomites, and Ammonites. We know very well from other parts of his history, whose posterity they were, but here he tells us how they came to these countries in which Israel found them; they were not the *aborigines*, or first planters. But, (1.) The Moabites dwelt in a country which had belonged to a numerous race of giants, called Emims, *i.e.* terrible ones; as tall as the Anakims, and perhaps more fierce, *ver. 10, 11.* (2.) The Edomites in like manner dispossessed the Horims from mount Seir, and took their country, *ver. 12.* and again, *ver. 22.* of which we read, *Gen. xxxvi. 20.* (3.) The Ammonites likewise got possession of a country that had formerly been inhabited by giants, called Zamzummims, crafty men, or wicked men, *ver. 20, 21.* probably the same that are called Zuzims, *Gen. xiv. 5.* He illustrates these remarks by an instance older than any of these, the Caphtorims, (who were akin to the Philistines, *Gen. x. 14.*) drove the Avims out of their country and took possession of it, *ver. 23.* the learned Bishop Patrick supposes these Avims, being expelled here, to have settled in Assyria, and to be the same

people we read of under that name, *2 Kings xvii. 31.* Now these revolutions are recorded, (1.) To shew how soon the world was peopled after the flood, so well peopled that when a family grew numerous, they could not find a place to settle in, at least in that part of the world; but they must drive out those that were already settled. (2.) To shew that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, giants were expelled by those of ordinary stature; for, probably, these giants like those before the flood, (*Gen. vi. 4.*) were notorious for impiety and oppression, which brought the judgments of God upon them, against which their great strength would be no defence. (3.) To shew what uncertain things worldly possessions are, and how oft they change their owners: It was so of old, and ever will be so. Families decline, and from them estates are transferred to families that increase; so little constancy or continuance is there in these things! (4.) To encourage the children of Israel, who were now going to take possession of Canaan, against the difficulties they would meet with, and to shew the unbelief of those that were afraid of the sons of Anak, to whom the giants here said to be conquered are compared, *ver. 11—21.* if the providence of God had done this for Moabites and Ammonites, much more would his promise do it for Israel his peculiar people.

(2.) The advances which Israel made towards Canaan. They passed by the way of the wilderness of Moab, *ver. 8.* and then went over the brook or vale of Zered, *ver. 13.* and there Moses takes notice of the fulfilling of the word God had spoken concerning them. That none of those that were numbered at mount Sinai, should see the land that God had promised, *Numb. xiv. 23.* according to that sentence, now they began to set their faces towards Canaan and to have it in their eye, notice is taken of their being all destroyed and consumed, and not a man of them left, *ver. 14.* Common providence, we may observe, in about 38 years, ordinarily raiseth a new generation, so that in that time few remain of the old ones; but here it was intirely new, and none at all remained but Caleb and Joshua; for indeed the hand of the Lord was against them, *ver. 15.* Those cannot but waste, until they are consumed, who have the hand of God against them. Observe, Israel is not called to engage with the Canaanites till all the men of war, the veteran regiments, that had been used to hardships, and had learned the art of war from the Egyptians, were consumed and dead from among the people, *ver. 16.* that the conquest of Canaan being affected by an host of new raised men, trained up in a wilderness, the excellency of the power might the more plainly appear to be of God, and not of men.

3. The caution given them not to meddle with the Moabites or Ammonites, whom they must not dispossess, not so much as disturb in their possessions. Distress them not, or contend with them, *ver. 9.* though the Moabites aimed to ruin Israel, *Numb. xxii. 6.* yet Israel must not aim to ruin them. If others design us a mischief, that will not justify us in designing them a mischief. But why must not the Moabites and Ammonites be meddled with? (1.) Because they were the children of Lot, *ver. 9—19.* righteous Lot, who kept his integrity in Sodom. Note, Children often fare the better in this world for the piety of their ancestors; the seed of the upright, though they degenerate, yet are blessed with temporal good things. (2.) Because the land they were possessed of was what God had given them, and he did not design it for Israel. Even wicked men have a right to their worldly possessions, and must not be wronged. The tares are allowed their place in the field, and must not be rooted out until the harvest. God gives and preserves outward blessings to wicked men, to shew that these are not the best things, but he has better in store for his own children.

24. ¶ Rise ye up, take your journey, and pass over the river Arnon: behold, I have given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land; begin to possess it, and contend with him in battle. 25. This day will I begin to put the dread of thee, and the fear of thee, upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee. 26. ¶ And I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth, unto Sihon king of Heshbon, with words of peace, saying, 27. Let me pass through thy land: I will go along by the highway, I will neither turn unto the right hand nor to the left. 28. Thou shalt sell me meat for money, that I may eat; and give me water for money, that I may drink; only I will pass through on my feet: 29. (As the children of Esau which dwell in Seir, and the Moabites which dwell in Ar, did unto me) until I shall pass over Jordan, into the land which the LORD our God giveth us. 30. But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him: for the LORD thy God hardened his spirits, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as appeareth this day. 31. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have begun to give Sihon and his land before thee: begin to possess that thou mayest inherit his land. 32. Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to fight at Jahaz. 33. And the LORD our God delivered him before us, and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people. 34. And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain. 35. Only the cattle we took for a prey unto ourselves, and the spoil of the city, which we took. 36. From Aroer, which is by the brink of the river of Arnon, and from the city that is by the river, even unto Gilead there was not one city too strong for us: the LORD our God delivered all unto us. 37. Only unto the land of the children of Ammon, thou camest not, nor unto any place of the river Jabbok, nor unto the cities in the mountains; nor unto whatsoever the LORD our God forbade us.

God having tried the self-denial of his people, in forbidding them to meddle with the Moabites and Ammonites, and they having quietly passed by those rich countries, and though superior in number not made any attack upon

upon them, here he recompenseth them for their obedience by giving them possession of the country of Sihon king of the Amorites. If we forbear what God forbids, we shall receive what he promiseth, and shall be no losers at last by our obedience; though it may seem for the present to be our loss. Wrong not others, and God shall right thee.

1. God gives them commission to seize upon the country of Sihon king of Heshbon, ver. 24, 25. This was then God's way of disposing of kingdoms, but such particular grants are not now either to be expected or pretended. In this commission observe, (1.) Though God assured them the land should be their own, yet they must bestir themselves and contend in battle with the enemy. What God gives, we must endeavour to get. (2.) God promiseth that when they fight he will fight for them. Do you begin to possess it, and I will begin to put the dread of you upon them. God would dispirit the enemy, and so destroy them; would magnify Israel and so terrify all those against whom they were commissioned. See Exod. xv. 14.

2. Moses sends to Sihon a message of peace, only begs a passage through his land, with a promise to give his country no disturbance, but the advantage of trading for ready money with so great a body, ver. 26, 27, 28, 29. Moses herein did neither disobey God, who bid him contend with Sihon, nor dissemble with Sihon; but doubtless it was by divine direction that he did it, that Sihon might be left inexcusable, though God hardened his heart. This may illustrate the method of God's dealing with those to whom he gives his gospel, but doth not give grace to believe it.

3. Sihon began the war, ver. 32. God having made his heart obstinate, and hid from his eyes the things that belonged to his peace, ver. 30. That he might deliver him into the hand of Israel. Those that meddle with the people of God, meddle to their own hurt; and God sometimes ruins his enemies by their own resolves. See Mic. iv. 11, 12, 13. Rev. xiv. 14.

4. Israel was victorious. (1.) They put all the Amorites to the sword, men, women and children, ver. 33, 34. this they did as the executioners of God's wrath; now the measure of the Amorites' iniquity was full, Gen. xv. 16. and the longer it was in the filling, the sorer was the reckoning at last. This was one of the devoted nations, they died not as Israel's enemies, but as sacrifices to divine justice, in the offering of which sacrifices Israel was employed as a kingdom of priests. The case being therefore extraordinary, it ought not to be drawn into a precedent for military executions, which make no distinction, and give no quarter; they will have judgment without mercy, that shew no mercy. (2.) They took possession of all they had; their cities, ver. 34. their goods, ver. 35. and their land, ver. 36. the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just. What a new world did Israel now come into? Most of them were born, and had lived all their days in a vast howling wilderness, where they knew not what either fields or cities were: had no houses to dwell in, neither sowed nor reaped: and now of a sudden to become masters of a country so well built, so well husbanded, this made them amends for their long waiting, and yet it was but the earnest of a great deal more. Much more joyful will the change be which holy souls will experience, when they remove out of the wilderness of this world to the better country, that is the heavenly; to the city that has foundations.

C H A P. III.

Moses in this chapter relates, 1. The conquest of Og, king of Bashan, and the seizing of his country, ver. 1—11. 2. The distribution of these new conquests to the two tribes and a half, ver. 12—17. Under certain provisos and limitations, ver. 18—20. 3. The encouragement to Joshua to carry on the war which was so gloriously begun, ver. 21, 22. 4. Moses's request to go over into Canaan, ver. 23—25. With the denial of that request, but the grant of an equivalent, ver. 26—29.

1. **T**HEN we turned, and went up the way to Bashan: and Og the king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. 2. And the LORD said unto me, Fear him not: for I will deliver him, and all his people, and his land into thy hand; and thou shalt do unto him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon. 3. So the LORD our God delivered into our hands Og also, the King of Bashan, and all his people: and we smote him until none was left to him remaining. 4. And we took all his cities at that time, there was not a city which we took not from them, threescore cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. 5. All these cities were fenced with high walls, gates and bars, beside unwalled towns a great many. 6. And we utterly destroyed them, as we did unto Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children of every city. 7. But all the cattle, and the spoil of the cities, we took for a prey to ourselves. 8. And we took at that time out of the hand of the two kings of the Amorites, the land that was on this side Jordan, from the river of Arnon, unto mount Hermon, 9. (Which Hermon the Sidonians called Syrión: and the Amorites called it Shenir.) 10. All the cities of the plain, and all Gilead, and all Bashan, unto Salchah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan: 11. For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of giants; behold his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon; nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man.

We have here another brave country delivered into the hand of Israel, that of Bashan; the conquest of Sihon and Og are often mentioned together to the praise of God, the rather because in these Israel's triumphs began, Psal. cxxxv. 11.—cxxxvi. 19.

See, 1. How they got the mastery of Og, a very formidable prince, (1.) Very strong, for he was of the remnant of the giants, ver. 11. his personal strength was extraordinary; a monument of which was preserved by the

Ammonites in his bedstead, which was shewed as a rarity in their chief city. You may guess at his weight by the materials of his bedstead, it was iron, as if a bedstead of wood were too weak for him to trust to; and you might guess at his stature by the dimensions of it, it was nine cubits long, and four cubits broad; which supposing a cubit to be but half a yard, (and some learned men have made it appear to be somewhat more) was four yards and a half long, and two yards broad; and if we allow his bedstead to be two cubits longer than himself, and that is as much as we need allow, he was three yards and a half high, double to the stature of an ordinary man, and every way proportionable, yet they smote him, ver. 3. Note. When God pleads his people's cause, he can deal with giants as with grasshoppers. No man's might can secure him against the Almighty. His army likewise was very powerful, so he had the command of sixty fortified cities, besides unwalled towns, ver. 5. Yet all this was nothing before God's Israel, when they came with commission to destroy them. (2.) He was very stout and daring; he came out against Israel to battle, ver. 1. It was wonder he did not take warning by the ruin of Sihon, and send to desire conditions of peace; but he trusted to his own strength, and so was hardened to his own destruction. Note. Those that are not awakened by the judgments of God upon others, but persist in their defiance of heaven, are ripening apace for the like destruction upon themselves, Jer. iii. 9. God bade Moses not fear him, ver. 2. If Moses himself was so strong in faith as not to need the caution, yet it is probable the people needed it; and for them these fresh assurances are designed, I will deliver him into thine hand. Not only deliver thee out of his hand, that he shall not be thy ruin, but deliver him into thy hand, that thou shalt be his ruin, and make him pay dear for his attempt. He adds, thou shalt do to him, as thou didst to Sihon; intimating that they ought to be encouraged in their former victory to trust in God for another victory, for he is God, and changeth not.

2. How they got possession of Bashan, a very considerable country. They took all the cities, ver. 4. and all the spoil of them, ver. 7. They made them all their own, ver. 10. So that now they had in their hands all that fruitful country which lay east of Jordan, from the river Arnon unto Hermon, ver. 8. Their conquering and possessing of these countries was intended, not only for the encouragement of Israel in the wars of Canaan, but for the satisfaction of Moses before his death; because he must not live to see the completing of their victory and settlement, God thus gives him a specimen of it. Thus the spirit is given to them that believe, as the earnest of their inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.

12. And this land, which we possessed at that time, from Aroer, which is by the river Arnon, and half mount Gilead, and the cities thereof, gave I unto the Reubenites, and to the Gadites. 13. And the rest of Gilead, and all Bashan, being the kingdom of Og, gave I unto the half-tribe of Manasseh; all the region of Argob, with all Bashan, which was called the land of giants. 14. Jair the son of Manasseh took all the country of Argob, unto the coasts of Geshuri, and Maachathi: and called them after his own name, Bashan-havoth-jair, unto this day. 15. And I gave Gilead unto Machir. 16. And unto the Reubenites, and unto the Gadites, I gave from Gilead even unto the river Arnon half the valley, and the border, even unto the river Jabbok, which is the border of the children of Ammon: 17. The plain also, and Jordan, and the coast thereof, from Chinnereth even unto the sea of the plain, even the salt-sea, under Ashdodh Pithah eastward. 18. ¶ And I commanded you at that time saying, The LORD your God hath given you this land to possess it: ye shall pass over armed before your brethren the children of Israel, all that are meet for the war. 19. But your wives and your little ones, and your cattle (for I know that ye have much cattle) shall abide in your cities which I have given you: 20. Until the LORD have given rest unto your brethren, as well as unto you, and until they also possess the land which the LORD your God hath given them beyond Jordan, and then shall ye return every man unto his possession which I have given you.

Having shewed how this country they were now in was conquered, in these verses he shews how it was settled upon the Reubenites, Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh, which we had the story of before, Numb. xxxii. here is the rehearsal.

1. Moses specifies the particular parts of the country that were allotted to each tribe; especially the distribution of the lot to the half tribe of Manasseh, the subdividing of which tribe is observable. Joseph was divided into Ephraim and Manasseh; Manasseh was divided into one half on one side Jordan, and the other half on the other side: that here on the east-side Jordan, was again divided into two great families, which had their several allotments, Jair, ver. 14. Machir, ver. 15. and perhaps Jacob's prediction of the smallness of that tribe was now accomplished in these divisions and subdivisions. Observe, That Bashan is here called the land of the giants, because it had been in their possession, but Og was the last of them. These giants, it seems, had lost their country, and were rooted out of it sooner than any of their neighbours; for they who presuming upon their strength and stature had their hand against every man, had every man's hand against them, and went down slain to the pit, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.

2. He repeats the conditions of the grant, which they had already agreed to, ver. 18, 19, 20. That they should send a strong detachment over Jordan, to lead the van in the conquest of Canaan, who should not return to their families, at least not to settle; (though for a time they might retire thither into winter quarters at the end of a campaign) till they had seen their brethren in as full a possession of their respective allotments, as themselves were now in of theirs. They must hereby be taught, not to look at their own things only, but at the things of others, Phil. ii. 4. It ill becomes an Israelite to be selfish, and to prefer any private interest before the public welfare. When we are at rest, we should desire to see our brethren at rest too, and should be ready to do what we can towards it; for we are not born for ourselves, but are members one of another. A good man cannot rejoice

rejoice much in the comforts of his family, unless withal he see *peace upon Israel*, Psal. cxxviii. 6.

21. ¶ And I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, Thine eyes have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto these two kings: so shall the LORD do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest. 22. Ye shall not fear them: for the LORD your God he shall fight for you. 23. And I besought the LORD at that time saying, 24. O LORD God thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God *is there* in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? 25. I pray thee let me go over, and see the good land that *is* beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon, 26. But the LORD was wroth with me, for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the LORD said unto me, Let it suffice thee, speak no more unto me of this matter. 27. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan. 28. But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see. 29. So we abode in the valley over against Beth-peor.

Here is, 1. The encouragement Moses gave to Joshua, who was to succeed him in the government, ver. 21, 22. He commands him not to fear. Thus those that are aged and experienced in the service of God, should do all they can to strengthen the hand of those that are young and setting out in religion. Two things he would have him consider for his encouragement. (1.) What God had done: Joshua had seen what a total defeat God had given by the forces of Israel to these two kings, and from thence he might easily infer, *so shall the Lord do to all the rest of the kingdoms* we are to make war upon. He must not only infer from thence, that thus the Lord can do with them all, for his arm is not shortened, but this he will do, for his purpose is not changed; he that has begun, will finish; as for God his work is perfect. Joshua had seen it with his own eyes: And the more we have seen of the instances of divine wisdom, power, and goodness, the more inexcusable we are if we *fear what flesh can do unto us*. (2.) What God had promised. The Lord your God he shall fight for you; and that cause cannot but be victorious which the Lord of hosts fights for. If God be for us, who can be against us, so as to prevail? We reproach our leader if we follow him trembling.

2. The prayer Moses made for himself, and the answer God gave to that prayer.

1. His prayer was, That if it were God's will, he might go before Israel over Jordan into Canaan. At that time, when he had been encouraging Joshua to fight Israel's battles, taking it for granted that he must be their leader; upon that occasion he was touched with an earnest desire to go over himself, which expresseth itself not in any passionate and impatient complaints, or reflections upon the sentence he was under, but in humble prayers to God for a gracious reversing of it. *I besought the Lord*. Note, We should never allow any desires in our heart; which we cannot in faith offer up to God by prayer; and what desires are innocent, let them be presented to God. We have not because we ask not.

Observe, 1. What he pleads here. Two things. (1.) The great experience he had of God's goodness to him in what he had done for Israel. *Thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness*, Lord, perfect what thou hast begun. Thou hast given me to see thy glory in the conquest of these two kings, and the sight has affected me with wonder and thankfulness, O let me see more of the outgoings of my God, my King. This great work, no doubt, will be carried on and completed, let me have the satisfaction of seeing it. Note, The more we see of God's glory in his works, the more we will desire to see. *The works of the Lord are great*, and therefore are sought out more and more of all them that have pleasure therein. (2.) The good impressions that had been made upon his heart by what he had seen; for *what God is there in heaven or in earth that can do according to thy works*? The more we are affected with what we have seen of God, and of his wisdom, power, and goodness, the better prepared we are for farther discoveries. Those shall see the works of God that admire him in them. Moses had thus expressed himself, concerning God and his works, long before, Exod. xv. 11. and he still continues of the same mind, that there are no works worthy to be compared with God's works, Psal. lxxxvi. 8.

2. What he begs, *I pray thee let me go over*, ver. 25. God had said he should not go over; yet he prays he might; not knowing but that the threatening was conditional, for it was not ratified with an oath, as that concerning the people was, that they should not enter. Thus Hezekiah prayed for his own life; and David for the life of the child, after both had been expressly threatened; and the former prevailed, though the latter did not. Moses remembered the time, when he had by prayer prevailed with God to recede from the declarations he had made of his wrath against Israel, as Exod. xxxii. 14. And why might he not hope in like manner to prevail for himself? *Let me go over and see the good land*. Not let me go over to be a prince and ruler there; he seeks not his own honour, is content to resign the government to Joshua; but let me go to be a spectator of thy kindness to Israel; to see what I believe concerning the goodness of the land of promise. How pathetically doth he speak of Canaan, that good land, that goodly mountain! Note, Those may hope obtain and enjoy God's favours, and know how to value them. What he means by that goodly mountain, we may learn from Psal. lxxviii. 54. where it is said of God's Israel, that he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain which is right hand had purchased: Where it is plainly to be understood of the whole land of Canaan, yet with an eye to the sanctuary, the glory of it.

2. God's answer to this prayer had in it a mixture of mercy and judgment that he might sing unto God of both.

1. There was judgment in the denial of this request, and that in something of anger too, ver. 26. *The Lord was wroth with me for your sakes*. God not only sees sin in his people, but is much displeased with it; and even those that are delivered from the wrath to come, yet may lie under the tokens of God's wrath in this world: and may be denied some particular favour which their hearts are much upon. God is a gracious, tender, loving Father; but he is angry with his children when they do amiss, and denies

them many a thing that they desire and are ready to cry for. But how was he wroth with Moses for the sake of Israel? Either, (1.) For that sin which they provoked him to. See Psal. cvi. 32, 33. Or, (2.) The removal of Moses at that time when he could so ill be spared, was a rebuke to all Israel, and a punishment of their sin. Or, (3.) It was for their sakes that it might be a warning to them to take heed of offending God by passionate and unbelieving speeches at any time, after the similitude of his transgression; for if *this were done to such a green tree, what should be done to the dry*? He acknowledges God would not hear him. God had often heard him for Israel, yet would not hear him for himself: It was the prerogative of Christ, the great intercessor, to be heard always, yet of him his enemies said, *He saved others, himself he could not save*; Which the Jews would not have upbraided him with, had they considered that Moses, their great prophet, prevailed for others, but for himself he could not prevail. Though Moses, being one of the wrestling seed of Jacob, did not seek in vain, yet he had not the thing itself which he sought for. God may accept our prayers, and yet not grant us the very thing we pray for.

2. Here is mercy mixed with this wrath; in several things.

1. God quieted the spirit of Moses under the decree that was gone forth, by that word, ver. 26. *Let it suffice thee*. With which word, no doubt a divine power went to reconcile Moses to the will of God, and to bring him to acquiesce in it. If God do not by his providence give us what we desire if by his grace he make us content without it, it comes much to one. *Let it suffice thee* to have God for thy father, and Heaven for thy portion, though thou hast not every thing thou wouldst have in this world. Be satisfied with this, *God is all-sufficient*.

2. He put an honour upon his prayer, in bespeaking him not to insist upon this request. *Speak no more to me of this matter*. It intimates, that what God doth think fit to grant, we should not think fit to ask; and that God takes such a pleasure in the prayer of the upright, that it is no pleasure to him, no, not in any particular instance, to give a denial to it.

3. He promised him a sight of Canaan from the top of Pisgah, ver. 27. Though he should not have the possession of it, he should have the prospect of it; not to tantalize him, but such a sight of it as would yield him true satisfaction, and would enable him to form a very clear and pleasing idea of that promised land. Probably Moses had not only his sight preserved for other purposes, but greatly enlarged for this purpose; for if it were not to have such a sight of it as others could not have from the same place, it had been no particular favour Moses, nor the matter of a promise. Even great believers, in this present state, see heaven but at a distance.

4. He provided him a successor, one who should support the honour of Moses, and carry on and complete that glorious work, which the heart of Moses was so much upon, the bringing of Israel into Canaan, and settling them there, ver. 28. *Charge Joshua, and encourage him* in this work. Those to whom God gives a charge, he will be sure to give an encouragement to; and it is a comfort to the Church's friends when they are dying and going off, to see God's work likely to be carried on by other hands, when they are silent in the dust.

C H A P. IV.

In this chapter we have, 1. A most earnest and pathetic exhortation to obedience, both in general and in some particular instances, backed with a great variety of very pressing arguments, repeated again and again, and set before them in the most moving and affectionate manner imaginable, ver. 1—40. 2. The appointing the cities of refuge on that side Jordan, ver. 41—43. 3. The particular description of the place where Moses delivered the following repetition of the law, ver. 44—49.

1. NOW therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes, and unto the judgments which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you. 2. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. 3. Your eyes have seen what the LORD did because of Baal-peor: for all the men that followed Baal-peor, the LORD thy God hath destroyed them from among you. 4. But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your God, are alive every one of you this day. 5. Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. 6. Keep therefore and do them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. 7. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call him upon for? 8. And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous, as all this law which I set before you this day? 9. Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from the heart all the days of thy life, but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons: 10. Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children. 11. And ye came near and stood under the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness. 12. And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only

only *ye heard* a voice. 13. And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, *even* ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. 14. ¶ And the LORD commanded me at that time, to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it. 15. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves (for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day *that* the LORD spake unto you in Horeb, out of the midst of the fire.) 16. Lest ye corrupt *yourselves*, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female. 17. The likeness of any beast that *is* on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air. 18. The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that *is* in the waters beneath the earth. 19. And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, *even* all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven. 20. But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, *even* out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as *ye are* this day. 21. Furthermore, the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, and sware that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go unto that good land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance. 22. But I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan; but ye shall go over and possess that good land. 23. Take heed unto yourselves lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee. 24. For the LORD thy God *is* a consuming fire, *even* a jealous God. 25. ¶ When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt *yourselves*, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD thy God, to provoke him to anger: 26. I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto you go over Jordan to possess it: ye shall not prolong *your* days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. 27. And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you. 28. And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. 29. But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. 30. When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, *even* in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice: (31. For the LORD thy God *is* a merciful God) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them. 32. For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of Heaven unto the other, whether there hath been *any such thing* as this great thing *is*, or hath been heard like it? 33. Did *ever* people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? 34. Or, hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of *another* nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? 35. Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the LORD he *is* God; *there is none else* beside him. 36. Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire, and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire. 37. And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their feed after them, and brought thee out of his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt: 38. To drive out nations from before thee, greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in to give thee their land for an inheritance, as *it is* this day. 39. Know therefore this day, and consider *it* in thine heart, that the LORD he *is* God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: *there is none else*. 40. Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it

may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong *thy* days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for ever.

This most lively and excellent discourse is so entire, and the particulars of it so oft repeated, that we must take it altogether in the exposition of it, and endeavour to digest it into proper heads, for we cannot divide it into paragraphs.

1. In general, it is the use and application of the foregoing history; it comes in by way of inference from it, ver. 1. *Now therefore hearken, O Israel.* This we should make of the review of God's providences concerning us, we should by them be quickened to engage in duty and obedience. The histories of the years of ancient times should in like manner be approved by us.

2. The scope and drift of his discourse is to persuade them to keep close to God, and to his service, and not to forsake him for any other god, nor in any instance to decline from their duty to him. Now observe what he saith to them with a great deal of divine rhetoric. (1.) By way of exhortation and direction. (2.) By way of motive and argument to intice his exhortations.

1. See here how he charges and commands them, and shews them *what is good, and what the Lord required of them.*

1. He demands their diligent attention to the word of God, and to the statutes and judgments that were taught them, *Hearken, O Israel.* He means not only that they must now give him the hearing, but that whenever the book of the law was read to them, or read by them, they should be attentive to it. Hearken to the statutes, as containing the great commands of God, and the great concerns of your own souls, and therefore challenging your utmost attention. At Horeb God had made them hear his words, ver. 10. hear them with a witness; the attention which was then constrained by the circumstances of the delivery, ought ever after to be engaged by the excellency of the things themselves. What God so spake once, we should hear twice, hear often.

2. He charges them to preserve the divine law pure and entire among them, ver. 2. Keep it pure, and do not add to it, keep it intire, and do not diminish from it. Not in practice, to some; ye shall not add, by committing the evil which the law forbids; nor diminish, by omitting the good which the law requires; Not in opinion, so others; ye shall not add your own inventions, as if the divine institutions were defective, nor introduce, much less impose, any rites in religious worship, other than what God has appointed; nor shall ye diminish, or let aside, any thing that is appointed, as needless or superfluous. God's work is perfect, nothing can be put to it or taken from it, but it makes it the worse. See Eccl. iii. 14. The Jews understand it as prohibiting the alteration of the text or the letter of the law even in the least jot or tittle. And to their great care and exactness herein we owe very much, under God, the purity and integrity of the Hebrew code. We find a fence like this made about the New Testament in the close of it, Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

3. He charges them to keep God's commandments, ver. 2. to do them, ver. 5—14. to keep and do them, ver. 6. to perform the covenant, ver. 13. Hearing must be in order to doing; knowledge in order to practice. God's commandments were the way they must keep in, the rule they must keep to; they must govern themselves by the moral precepts: perform their devotion according to their divine ritual; and administer justice according to the judicial law. He concludes his discourse, ver. 40. with this repeated charge, *Thou shalt keep his statutes and his commandments which I command thee.* What are laws made for but to be observed and obeyed?

4. He charges them to be very strict and careful in the observance of the law, ver. 9. Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, and ver. 15. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves: And again, ver. 23. Take heed to yourselves. Those that would be religious must be very cautious, and walk circumspectly. Considering how many temptations we are compassed about with, and what corrupt inclinations we have in our own bosoms, we have great need to look about us, and to keep our hearts with all diligence. Those cannot walk aright that walk carelessly, and at all adventures.

5. He charges them particularly to take heed of the sin of idolatry, that sin which of all others they would be most tempted to by the customs of the nations, were most addicted to by the corruption of their hearts, and would be most provoking to God, and of most pernicious consequence to themselves; *Take good heed, lest, in this matter ye corrupt yourselves:* ver. 15, 16. Two sorts of idolatry he cautions them against:

1. The worship of images, however by them they might intend to worship the true God, as they had done in the golden calf; so changing the truth of God into a lie, and his glory into shame. The second commandment is expressly directed against this, and it is here enlarged upon, ver. 15, 16, 18. Take heed lest ye corrupt yourselves, i. e. lest ye debauch yourselves; for they that think to make images of God, form in their minds such notions of him, as must needs be an inlet to all impieties; it is intimated that it is a spiritual adultery; and take heed lest you destroy yourselves. If any thing ruin you, this will be it. Whatever you do, make no similitude of God, either in a human shape, male or female: or in the shape of any beast or fowl, serpent or fish, for the Heathen worshipped their gods by images of all these kinds, being either not able to form, or not willing to admit, the plain demonstration which we find, *Hos. viii. 6. The workmen made it, therefore it is not God.* To represent an infinite Spirit by an image, and the great Creator by the image of a creature, is the greatest affront we can put upon God, and the greatest cheat we can put upon ourselves.

As an argument against their making images of God, he urgeth it very much upon them, that when God made himself known to them at Horeb, he did it by a voice of words which sounded in their ears, to teach them that *faith comes by hearing*, and God in the word *is nigh us*; but not by any image presented to their eye; for to see God as he is, is reserved for our happiness in the other world, and to see him as he is not, will do us hurt and no good in this world. Ye saw no similitude, ver. 12. no manner of similitude, ver. 15. It is probable they expected to have seen some similitude, for they were ready to break through unto the Lord to gaze, *Exod. xix. 21.* But all they saw was light and fire, and nothing that they could make an image of; God in infinite wisdom so ordering his manifestation of himself because of the peril of idolatry. It is said indeed of Moles that he beheld the similitude of the Lord, Numb. xii. 8. God allowing him that favour, because he was above the temptation of idolatry; but for the people who were newly come from admiring the idols of Egypt, they must see no resemblance of God lest they should have pretended to copy it, and so should have received the second commandment in vain; for, saith Bishop Patrick they would have thought that that forbade them only to make any other representation of God besides that wherein he shewed himself to them, in which they would have concluded it lawful to represent him. Let this be a caution to us, to take heed of making images of God in our fancy or imagination, when

we are worshipping him, lest thereby we corrupt ourselves. There may be idols in the heart, where there are none in the sanctuary.

1. The worship of the sun, moon, and stars, is another sort of idolatry they are here cautioned against, *ver. 14*. This was the first and most ancient idolatry of all other, and the most plausible, drawing the adoration to those creatures, that not only are in situations above us, but are most sensibly glorious in themselves, and most generally serviceable to the world. And the plausibility of it made it the more dangerous. It is intimated here, (1.) How strong the temptation is to sense; for the caution is, *lest thou shouldest be driven to worship them*, by the strong impulse of a vain imagination, and the impetuous torrent of the customs of the nations. The heart is supposed to walk after the eye, which in our corrupt and degenerate state it is very apt to do. *When thou seest the sun, moon, and stars*, thou wilt so admire the height and brightness, their regular motion, and powerful influence, that thou wilt be strongly tempted to give that glory to them which is due to Him that made them, and made them what they are to us; gave them their beings, and made them blessings to the world. It seems there was need of a great deal of resolution to arm them against this temptation: so weak was their faith in an invisible God and an invisible world. (2.) Yet he shews how weak the temptation would be to those that would use their reason; for these pretended deities, the *sun, moon, and stars* were only blessings which the Lord their God, whom they were obliged to worship had imparted to all nations. It is absurd to worship them, for, (1.) They are man's servants, were made and ordained to give light on the earth, and shall we serve those that were made to serve us? The sun, in Hebrew, is called *Shemesh*, which signifies a *servant*, for it is the minister general of this visible world, and holds a candle to all mankind; let it not then be worshipped as a lord. (2.) They are God's gifts; he has imparted them; whatever benefit we have by them, we owe it to him; it is therefore highly injurious to him to give that honour and praise to them, which is due to him only.

6. He chargeth them to teach their children to observe the law of God. *Teach them thy sons, and thy son's sons, ver. 9. that they may teach thy children, ver. 10.* (1.) Care must be taken in general to preserve the entail of religion among them, and to transmit the knowledge and worship of God to posterity; for the kingdom of God in Israel was designed to be perpetual, if they did not forfeit the privilege of it. (2.) Parents must, in order hereunto, particularly take care to teach their own children the fear of God; and to train them up in an observance of all his commandments.

7. He charges them never to forget their duty, *ver. 23. Take heed, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God.* Though God is ever mindful of the covenant we are apt to forget it; and that is at the bottom of all our departures from God: We have need therefore to watch against all those things which would put the covenant out of our minds, and to watch over our own hearts, lest at any time we let it slip; and so we must take heed lest at any time we forget our religion, lest we lose it, or leave it off. Care and caution, and holy watchfulness, are the best helps against a bad memory. These are the directions and commands he gives them.

2. Let us now see what are the motives or arguments with which he backs these exhortations. How doth he order the cause before them, and fill his mouth with arguments! And a great deal he has to say on God's behalf; Some of his topics are indeed peculiar to that people, yet applicable to us. But upon the whole it is evident, that religion has reason on its side, the powerful charms of which, all that are irreligious willfully stop their ears to.

1. He urges the greatness, glory, and goodness of God. Did we consider what a God he is with whom we have to do, we would surely make conscience of our duty to him, and would not dare to sin against him. He minds them here, (1.) That the Lord Jehovah is the *only living and true God*. This they must know and consider, *ver. 39*. There are many things which we know, but are not the better for, because we do not consider them, we do not apply them to ourselves, nor draw proper inferences from them. This is a truth so evident that it cannot but be known, and so improvable that, if it were duly considered, it would effectually reform the world, *That the Lord Jehovah he is God*, an infinite and eternal Being, self-existent and self-sufficient, and the fountain of all being, power and motion; that he is *God in heaven above*, clothed with all the glory, and Lord of all the hosts of the upper world, and that he is *God upon earth beneath*, which though distant from the throne of his glory, is not out of the reach of his sight or power; and though despicable and mean, is not below his care and cognizance. And *there is none else*; no true and living God but he; all the deities of the Heathen were counterfeits and usurpers; nor did any of them so much as pretend to be universal monarchs in heaven or earth, but were only local deities. Israel, that worshipped no other but the supreme *Numen*, were for ever inexcusable, if they ever changed their God, or neglected him. (2.) That he is a *consuming fire, a jealous God, ver. 24*. Take heed of offending him, for, (1.) He has a jealous eye to discern an affront; he must have your entire affection and adoration, and will by no means endure a rival. God's jealousy over us is a good reason for our godly jealousy over ourselves. (2.) He has a heavy hand to punish an affront, especially in his worship, for there he is in a special manner jealous; he is a *consuming fire*; his wrath against sinners is so, it is dreadful and destroying; it is a *fiery indignation* which will devour his adversaries, *Heb. x. 27*. Fire consumes that only which is fuel for it, so the wrath of God fastens upon those only who by their own sin, have fitted themselves for destruction, *1 Cor. iii. 13*. *Ila. xxvii. 4*. Even in the New Testament we find the same argument urged upon us, as a reason why we should serve God with reverence, *Heb. xii. 28, 29*, because though he be our God, and a rejoicing light to those that serve him faithfully, yet he is a *consuming fire* to those that trifle with him. (3.) That yet he is a *merciful God, ver. 31*. It comes in here as an encouragement to repentance, but might serve as an inducement to obedience, and a consideration proper to prevent their apostasy. Shall we forsake a *merciful God*, who will never forsake us, as it follows here, if we be faithful unto him. Whither can we go to mend ourselves? Shall we forget the covenant of our God, who will not forget the covenant of our fathers? Let us be held to our duty by the bonds of love, and prevailed with by the mercies of God to cleave to him.

2. He urges their relation to this God, his authority over them, and their obligations to him. The commandments you are to keep and do, are not mine, saith Moses, not my inventions, not my injunctions, but they are the commandments of the Lord, framed by infinite wisdom, enacted by sovereign power, he is the Lord God of your fathers, *ver. 1*. so that you are his by inheritance, your fathers were his, and you were born in his house. He is the *Lord your God, ver. 2*. so that you are his by your own consent. He is the *Lord my God, ver. 5*. so that I treat with you as his agent and ambassador, and in his name Moses delivered unto them all that, and that only which he had received from the Lord.

3. He urges the wisdom of being religious, *ver. 6. for this is your wisdom in the sight of the nations*; In keeping God's commandments, 1. They would act wisely for themselves. *This is your wisdom*. It is not only agreeable to right reason, but highly conducive to our true interest; this is one of the first and most ancient maxims of divine revelation, *The fear of the Lord that*

is wisdom, Job xxviii. 28. 2. They would answer the expectation of their neighbours, who upon hearing or reading the precepts of the law that was given them, would conclude, that certainly the people that were governed by this law, were a *wise and understanding people*. Great things may justly be looked for from those that are guided by divine revelation, and unto whom are committed the oracles of God; they must needs be wiser and better than other people; and so they are, if they are ruled by the rules that are given them; and if they are not, though reproach may for their sakes be cast upon the religion they profess, yet it will in the end certainly return upon themselves to their eternal confusion. Those that enjoy the benefit of divine light and laws, ought to carry themselves so as to support their own reputation for wisdom and honour, (see *Ecc. x. 1*.) that God may be glorified thereby.

4. He urges the singular advantages they enjoyed by virtue of the happy establishment they were under, *ver. 7, 8*. our communion with God, (which is the highest honour and happiness we are capable of in this world) is kept up by the word and prayer; in both these Israel was happy above any people under heaven.

(1.) Never was any people so privileged in speaking to God, *ver. 7*. he was nigh unto them in all that they called upon him for, ready to answer their enquiries, and resolve them by his oracle; ready to answer their requests, and to grant them, by a particular providence. When they had cried unto God for bread, for water, for healing, they had found him near them, to succour and relieve them, a very present help, and in the midst of them, *Psal. xli. 1—5*. his ear open to their prayers. Observe, 1. It is the character of God's Israel that on all occasions they call upon him, in every thing they make their request known to God. They do nothing but what they consult him in, they desire nothing but what they come to him for. 2. Those that call upon God shall certainly find him within call, and ready to give an answer of peace to every prayer of faith; see *Ips. lviii. 9*. Thou shalt cry, as the child for the nurse, and he shall say, *here I am*, what doth my dear child cry for. 3. This is a privilege which makes the Israel of God truly great and honourable: What can go farther than this to magnify a people or person? Is any name more illustrious than that of Israel, a *prince with God*? What nation is there so great? Other nations might boast of greater numbers, larger territories, and more ancient incorporations, but none could boast of such an interest in heaven as Israel had. They had their gods, but not so nigh to them as Israel's God was; they could not help them in a time of need, as *1 Kings xviii. 27*.

(2.) Never was any people so privileged in hearing from God, by the statutes and judgments that were set before them, *ver. 8*. this also was the grandeur of Israel above any people. *What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous*? Observe, 1. That all the statutes and judgments of the divine law are infinitely just and righteous, above the statutes and judgments of any of the nations. The law of God is far more excellent than the law of nations. No law so consonant to natural equity and the unprejudiced dictates of right reason, so consistent with itself in all the parts of it, and so conducive to the welfare and interest of mankind, as the scripture law is, *Psal. cxix. 123*. 2. The having of these statutes and judgments set before them, is the true and transcendent greatness of any nation or people. See *Psal. cxlvii. 19, 20*. It is an honour to us that we have the Bible in reputation and power among us. It is an evidence of a people being high in the favour of God, and a means of making them high among the nations. They that magnify the law shall be magnified by it.

5. He urges God's glorious appearance to them at mount Sinai, when he gave them this law. This he insists much upon. *Take heed lest thou forget the day that thou stoodst before the Lord thy God in Horeb, ver. 10*. Some of them that were now alive could remember it, though they were then under twenty years of age, and the rest of them might be said to stand there in the loins of their fathers, who received the law and entered into covenant there, not for themselves only, but for their children, to whom God had an eye particularly in giving the law, that they might teach it their children.

Two things they must remember, and one would think they should never forget them.

1. What they saw at mount Sinai, *ver. 11*. they saw a strange composition of fire and darkness, both dreadful and very awful; and they must needs be a mighty foil to each other; the darkness made the fire in the midst of it look the more dreadful; Fires in the night are most frightful, and the fire made the darkness that surrounded it look the more awful; for it must needs be a strong darkness which such a fire did not disperse. In allusion to this appearance upon mount Sinai, God is said to shew himself for his people, and against his and their enemies, in fire and darkness together, *Psal. xviii. 8, 9*.

He tells them again, *ver. 36*. what they saw, for he would have them never to forget it, he shewed thee his great fire. One flash of lightning, that fire from heaven strikes an awe upon us; and some have observed that most creatures naturally turn their faces towards the lightning, as ready to receive the impressions of it: but how dreadful then must a constant fire from heaven be! It gave an earnest of the day of judgment in which the Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire.

As he minds them of what they saw, so he tells them what they saw not; no manner of similitude, from which they might form either an idea of God in their fancies, or an image of God in their high places. By what we see of God, sufficient ground is given us to believe him a being of infinite power and perfection, but no occasion given us to suspect him to have a body such as we have.

2. What they heard at mount Sinai, *ver. 12. The Lord spake unto you* with an intelligible voice, in your own language, and you heard it. This he enlargeth upon towards the close of his discourse, *ver. 32, 33—36*. (1.) They heard the voice of God, speaking out of heaven. God manifests himself to all the world in the works of creation, without speech or language and yet their voice is heard, *Psal. xix. 2*. but to Israel he made himself known by speech and language, condescending to the weakness of the Church's infant state. Here was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, to prepare the way of the Lord. (2.) They heard it out of the midst of the fire, which shewed that it was God himself that spake to them, for who else could dwell with devouring fire? God spake to Job out of the whirlwind, which was terrible; but to Israel out of the fire, which was more terrible. We have reason to be thankful that he doth not thus speak to us, but by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid, *Job xxiii. 6, 7*. (3.) They heard it and yet lived, *ver. 33*. It was a wonder of mercy that the fire did not devour them, or that they did not die for fear, when Moses himself trembled. (4.) Never any people heard the like. He bids them enquire of former days, and distant places, and they will find this favour of God to Israel without precedent or parallel, *ver. 32*. this singular honour done them, called for singular obedience from them. It might justly be expected they should do more for God than other people, since God had done so much more for them.

6. He urges God's gracious appearance for them, in bringing them out of

of Egypt, from thy iron furnace, where they laboured in the fire, forming them into a people, and then taking them to be his own people, a *people of inheritance*, ver. 20. this he mentions again, ver. 31, 37, 38. Never did God do such a thing for any people: the rise of this nation was quite different from the origin of all other nations. (1.) They were thus dignified and distinguished, not for any thing in them that was deserving or inviting, but because God had a kindness for their fathers, he chose them. See the reasons of free grace; we are not beloved for our own sakes, but for his sake who is the great trustee of the covenant. (2.) They were delivered out of Egypt by miracles and signs, in mercy to them, and in judgment upon the Egyptians, against whom God stretched out his arm, which was signified by Moses's stretching out his hand in summoning the plagues.

(3.) They were designed for a happy settlement in Canaan, ver. 38. Nations must be driven out from before them, to make room for them, to shew how much dearer they were to God than any other people were. Egyptians and Canaanites must both be sacrificed to Israel's honour and interest. They that stand in Israel's light, in Israel's way, it is at their peril.

7. He urges God's righteous appearance against them sometimes for their sins. He instances particularly in the matter of Peor, ver. 34. this had happened very lately; their eyes had seen but the other day the sudden destruction of those that joined themselves to Baal-peor, and the preservation of those that clave to the Lord; from which they might easily infer the danger of apostasy from God, and the benefit of adherence to him. He also takes notice again of God's displeasure against himself, ver. 21, 22. *The Lord was angry with me for your sakes.* He mentions this to try their ingenuity, whether they would be really troubled for the great prejudice they had occasioned to their faithful friend and leader. Other's sufferings for our sakes should grieve us more than our own.

8. He urges the certain benefit and advantage of obedience. This argument he begins with, ver. 1. *That ye may live, and go in and possess the land;* and this he concludes with, ver. 40. *That it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee.* He minds them that they were upon their good behaviour, their prosperity would depend upon their piety. If they kept God's precepts, he would undoubtedly fulfil his promises.

9. He urges the fatal consequences of their apostasy from God. That it would undoubtedly be the ruin of their nation. This he enlarges upon, ver. 25—31. Where, 1. He foresees their revolt from God to idols; that in process of time, when they had remained long in the land, and were settled upon their lees, they would corrupt themselves, and make a graven image; this was the sin that would most easily beset them, ver. 25.

2. He foretells the judgment of God upon them for this. Ye shall utterly be destroyed, ver. 26. Scattered among the nations, ver. 27. And their sin should be made their punishment, ver. 28. *There shall ye serve gods, the work of men's hands,* be compelled to serve them, whether ye will or no; or, through your own foolishness and stupidity, you will find no better succours to apply yourselves to in your captivity. Those that cast off the duties of religion in their prosperity, cannot expect the comforts of it when they come to be in distress. Justly are they then sent to the gods whom they have served, *Judg. x. 14.*

3. Yet he encourages them to hope that God would reserve mercy for them in the latter days; that he would by his judgments upon them bring them to repentance, and take them again into covenant with himself, ver. 29, 30, 31. Where observe, (1.) That whatever place we are in we may from thence seek the Lord our God, though ever so remote from our own land, or from his holy temple. There is no part of this earth that has a gulf fixed between it and heaven. (2.) They, and they only, shall find God to their comfort, who seek him with all their heart, i. e. that are entirely devoted to him, and earnestly desirous of his favour, and solicitous to obtain it. (3.) Afflictions are sent to engage and quicken us to see God, and by the grace of God working with them, many are reduced to their right mind. When these things are come upon thee, it is to be hoped thou wilt turn to the Lord thy God, for thou seest what comes of turning from him, see *Dan. ix. 11, 12.* (4.) God's faithfulness to his covenant encourageth us to hope that he will not reject us, though we are driven to him by affliction. If we at length remember the covenant, we shall find that he has not forgotten it.

Now let all these arguments be laid together, and then say, whether religion has not reason on its side? None cast off the government of their God, but those that have first abandoned the understanding of a man.

41. ¶ Then Moses severed three cities on this side Jordan, toward the sun-rising: 42. That the slayer might flee thither which should kill his neighbour unawares, and hated him not in time past: and that fleeing unto one of these cities, he might live: 43. *Namely,* Bezer in the wilderness, in the plain country, of the Reubenites; and Ramoth in Gilead, of the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan, of the Manassites. 44. ¶ And this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel. 45. *These are the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which Moses spake unto the children of Israel, after they came forth out of Egypt:* 46. On this side Jordan, in the valley over against Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon, whom Moses and the children of Israel smote, after they were come forth out of Egypt: 47. And they possessed his land, and the land of Og, king of Bashan, two kings of the Amorites, which were on this side Jordan, toward the sun-rising; 48. From Aroer, which is by the bank of the river Arnon even unto mount Sion, which is Hermon. 49. And all the plain on this side Jordan eastward, even unto the sea of the plain, under the springs of Pisgah.

Here is, 1. The nomination of the cities of refuge on that side Jordan where Israel now lay encamped. Three cities were appointed for that purpose, one in the lot of Reuben, another in that of Gad, and another in that of the half tribe of Manasseh, ver. 41, 42, 43. What Moses could do for the people while he was yet with them, he did, to give example to the rulers that were settled, that they might observe them the better when he was gone.

2. The introduction to another sermon that Moses preached to Israel, which we have in the following chapters. Probably, it was preached the

next sabbath day after, when the congregation attended to receive instruction. He had in general exhorted them to obedience in the former chapter; here he comes to repeat the law which they were to observe; for he demands an universal, but not implicit obedience. How can we do our duty, if we do not know it? Here therefore he sets the law before them, as the rule they were to work by, the rule they were to walk in: sets it before them, as the glass, in which they were to see their natural faces, that looking into this perfect law of liberty, they might continue therein. *These are the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments,* the moral, ceremonial, and judicial laws, which had been enacted before, when Israel was newly come out of Egypt, and were now repeated, on this side Jordan, ver. 44, 45, 46. The place where Moses gave them this law in charge, is here particularly described. It was, (1.) over against Beth-peor, an idol temple of the Moabites, which perhaps Moses sometimes looked towards with a particular caution to them, against the infection of that, and other such like dangerous places. (2.) It was upon their new conquests in the very land which they had got out of the hands of Sihon and Og, and were now actually in possession of, ver. 47. There present triumphs herein, were a powerful argument for obedience.

C H A P. V.

In this chapter we have the second edition of the ten commandments,

1. *The general intent of them; they were in the nature of a covenant between God and Israel,* ver. 1—5. 2. *The particular precepts are repeated,* ver. 6—21. *With the double delivery of them, both by word and writing,* ver. 22. 3. *The settling of the correspondence from thenceforward between God and Israel, by the mediation and ministry of Moses.* 1. *It was Israel's humble petition that it might be so,* ver. 23—27. 2. *It was God's gracious grant that it should be so,* ver. 28—31. *And from hence he infers the obligation they were under to obedience,* ver. 32.

1. **A**ND Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. 2. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. 3. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. 4. The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount, out of the midst of the fire. 5. (I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to shew you the word of the LORD: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount) saying,

Here is, 1. Moses summons the assembly. He called all Israel, not only the elders, but it is likely as many of the people as could come within hearing, ver. 1. The greatest of them were not above God's commands, not the meanest of them below his cognizance; but they were all concerned to hear what they were all bound to do.

2. He demands attention. *Hear, O Israel;* hear and heed, hear and remember. Hear, that you may learn, and keep, and do; else your hearing is to no purpose. When we hear the word of God, we must set ourselves to learn it, that we may have it ready to us upon all occasions, and what we have learned, we must put in practice, for that is the end of hearing and learning; not to fill our heads with notions, or our mouths with talk, but to rectify and direct our affections, and conversations.

3. He refers them to the covenant made with them in Horeb, as that which they must govern themselves by. See the wonderful condescension of divine grace in turning the command into a covenant, that we might be encouraged in it by the divine promise, both which are supposed in the covenant. The promises and threatenings annexed to some of the precepts, as to the second, third, and fifth, make them amount to a covenant. Observe, 1. The parties to this covenant. God made it *not with our fathers,* not with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; to them God gave the covenant of circumcision, *Acts viii. 8.* But not that of the ten commandments. The light of divine revelation shone gradually, and the children were made to know more of God's mind than their fathers had done. The covenant was made with us, or our immediate parents that represented us, before mount Sinai, and transacted for us. (2.) The publication of this covenant; God himself did as it were read the articles to them, ver. 4. *He talked with you face to face, word to word.* So the Chaldee. Not in dark visions, as of old he spake to the fathers, *Joh. iv. 12, 13.* but openly and clearly, and so as that all the thousands of Israel might hear and understand. He spake to them, and then received the answer they returned to him: thus was it transacted *face to face.* (3.) The mediator of the covenant, *Moses stood before God and them,* at the foot of the mount, ver. 5. and carried messages between them both for the settling of the preliminaries, *Exod. xix.* and for the exchanging of the ratifications, *Exod. xxiv.* Herein Moses was a type of Christ, who stands between God and man, to shew us the word of the Lord; a blessed day's man, that hath laid his hand upon us both, so that we may both hear from God, and speak to him without trembling.

6. ¶ I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, 7. Thou shalt have none other gods before me. 8. Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth. 9. Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, 10. And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments. 11. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. 12. Keep the sabbath-day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded

commanded thee. 13. Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: 14. But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates; that thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou. 15. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day. 16. ¶ Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged; and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. 17. Thou shalt not kill. 18. Neither shalt thou commit adultery. 19. Neither shalt thou steal: 20. Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour. 21. Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his man-servant, or his maid-servant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour's. 22. ¶ These words the LORD spake unto all your assembly, in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice; and he added no more: and he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.

Here is the repetition of the ten commandments; in which observe, 1. Though they had been spoken before, and written, yet they are again rehearsed: for precept must be upon precept, and line upon line, and all little enough to keep the word of God in our minds, and to preserve and renew the impressions of it. We have need to have the same things oft inculcated upon us. See *Phil.* iii. 1.

2. There is some variation here from that record, *Exod.* xx. as there is between the Lord's Prayer, as it is in *Matth.* vi. and as in *Luke* xi. in both it is more necessary that we tie ourselves to the thing than to the words inalterably.

3. The most considerable variation is in the fourth commandment, *Exod.* xx. the reason annexed is taken from the creation of the world; here it is taken from their deliverance out of Egypt, because that was typical of our redemption by Jesus Christ, in remembrance of which the Christian sabbath was to be observed, *ver.* 25. Remember that thou wast a servant, and God brought thee out. And therefore, (1.) It is fit that thy servant should be favoured by the sabbath-rest: for thou knowest the heart of a servant, and how welcome one day's ease will be after six days' labour. (2.) It is fit that thy God should be honoured by the sabbath-work, and the religious services of the day, in consideration for the great things he has done for thee. In the resurrection of Christ we were brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, with a mighty hand and an out-stretched arm; therefore by the gospel edition of the law, we are directed to observe the first day of the week, in remembrance of that glorious work of power and grace.

4. It is added in the fifth commandment, *that it may go well with thee*, which addition the apostle quotes, and puts first, *Eph.* vi. 3. *That it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long.* If there be instances of some that have been very dutiful to their parents, and yet have not lived long upon earth, we may reconcile it to the promise, by this explication of it, whether they live long or no, it shall go well with them, either in this world, or in a better. See *Ecc.* viii. 12.

5. The five last commandments are connected or coupled together, which they are not in *Exodus*; neither shalt thou commit adultery, neither shalt thou steal, &c. Which intimates that God's commands are all of a piece; the same authority which obliges us to one, obliges us to another; and we must not be partial in the law, but have respect to all God's commandments; for he that offends in one point is guilty of all, *Jam.* ii. 10, 11.

6. That these commandments were given with a great deal of awful solemnity, *ver.* 22. (1.) They were spoken with a great voice out of the fire and thick darkness. That was a dispensation of terror, designed to make the gospel of grace the more welcome, and to be a specimen of the terrors of the judgment-day, *Psal.* l. 3, 4. (2.) He added no more. What other laws he gave them, were sent by Moses, but no more were spoken in the same manner that the ten commandments were, *He added no more*, therefore we must not add; the law of the Lord is perfect. (3.) He wrote them in two tables of stone, that they might be preserved from corruption, and might be transmitted pure and entire to posterity, for whose use they were intended, as well as for the present generation. These being the heads of the covenant, the chest in which the written tables were deposited was called the ark of the covenant. See *Rev.* iv. 19.

23. And it came to pass, when we heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness (for the mountain did burn with fire) that ye came near unto me, *even* all the heads of your tribes, and your elders. 24. And ye said, Behold, the LORD our God hath shewed us his glory, and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth. 25. Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us. If we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, then we shall die. 26. For who is there of all flesh that hath heard the voice of the living God, speaking out of the midst of the fire (as we have) and lived? 27. Go thou near and hear all that the LORD our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it, and do it. 28. And the LORD heard the

voice of your words, when he spake unto me; and the LORD said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. 29. O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments, always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever! 30. Go say to them, Get you into your tents again. 31. But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it. 32. Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. 33. Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess.

Here, 1. Moses minds them of the agreement of both the parties that were now treating in the mediation of Moses.

1. Here is the mighty consternation that the people were put into, by the extreme terror with which the law was given. They owned, they could not hear it any more; *this great fire will consume us*, this dreadful voice will be fatal to us, we shall certainly die if we hear it any more, *ver.* 25. They wondered that they were not already struck dead with it, and took for an extraordinary instance of the divine power and goodness, not only that they were thus spoken to, but that they were enabled to bear it. For, *whoever heard the voice of the living God, as we have, and lived?* God's appearances have always been terrible to man, ever since the fall: but Christ, having taken away sin, invites us to come boldly to the throne of grace.

2. Their earnest request, that God would from henceforward speak to them by Moses, with a promise that they would hear what he said, as from God himself, and do it, *ver.* 27. It seems by this, (1.) That they expected to receive further commands from God, and were willing to hear more from him. (2.) That they thought Moses able to bear these discoveries of the divine glory, which they by reason of guilt were sensible of their inability to stand up under. They believed him to be a favourite of heaven, and also one that would be faithful to them; yet at other times they murmured at him, and but a little before this, were ready to stone him, *Exod.* xvii. 4. See how men's convictions correct their passions. (3.) That now they were in a good mind, under the strong convictions of the word they heard. Many have their consciences startled by the law, that have them not purified; fair promises are extorted from them, but no good principles fixed and rooted in them.

3. God's approbation of their request. (1.) He commends what they said, *ver.* 28. They spoke it to Moses, but God took notice of it; for there is not a word in our tongue but he knows it. He acknowledges they have well said. Their owning the necessity of a mediator to deal between them and God, was well said. Their desire to receive farther directions from God by Moses, and their promise to observe what directions should be given them, were well said. And what is well said, shall have its praise with God, and should have with us. What is good, as far as it goes, let it be commended. (2.) He wishes they were but sincere in it, *ver.* 29. *O that there were such an heart in them!* (1.) Such a heart as they should have a heart to fear God, and keep his commandments for ever. Note, The God of heaven is truly and earnestly desirous of the welfare and salvation of poor sinners: he has given abundant proof that he is so; he gives us time and space to repent; by his mercies invites to repentance, and waits to be gracious; has sent his Son to redeem us, published a general offer of pardon and life, has promised his spirit to those that pray for him, and has said it, and sworn, that he hath no pleasure in the ruin of sinners. (2.) Such a heart as they now had, or one would think they had. Note, It would be well with many, if there were always such a heart in them, as there seems to be sometimes: when they are under convictions of sin, or the rebukes of providence, or when they come to look death in the face; *How gracious will they be, when these plagues come upon them!* O that there were always such a heart in them. (3.) He appoints Moses to be his messenger to them, to receive the law from his mouth, and to communicate it to them, *ver.* 31. Here the matter was settled by consent of both parties, that God should henceforward speak to us by men like ourselves, by Moses and the prophets; the apostles and evangelists, whom if we believe not, neither would we be persuaded, though God should speak to us as he did to Israel at mount Sinai, or send expresses from heaven or hell.

4. Hence he infers a charge to them, to observe and do all that God had commanded them, *ver.* 32, 33. Seeing God had shewed himself so tender of them, and so willing to consider their frame, and gratify them in what they desire, and withal so willing to make the best of them; seeing they themselves had desired to have Moses for their teacher, who was now teaching them, and seeing they had promised so solemnly, and upon so many good causes and considerations, that they would hear and do, he charges them to walk in all the ways that God commanded them; assuring them that it would be highly for their advantage to do so. The only way to be happy, is to be holy. Say to the righteous it shall be well with them.

C H A P. VI.

Moses in this chapter goes on with his charge to Israel, to be sure to keep up their religion in Canaan. It is much the same with chap. iv. 1. His preface is a persuasive to obedience. The first truth to be believed that God is one, *ver.* 4. The first duty to be done to love him with all our heart, *ver.* 5. 3. He prescribes the means for keeping up religion, *ver.* 6—9. 4. He cautions them against those things which would be the ruin of religion. Abuse of plenty, *ver.* 10—12. Inclination to idolatry, *ver.* 14, 15. And gives them some general precepts, *ver.* 13, 16, 17, 18. 5. He directs them what instructions to give their children, *ver.* 20—25.

1. **N**OW these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD your God commanded

commanded to teach you, that ye might do *them* in the land whither ye go to possess it: 2. That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes, and his commandments which I command thee: thou and thy son, and thy sons' son, all the days of thy life, and that thy days may be prolonged. 3. ¶ Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do *it*, that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.

Observe here, (1.) That Moses taught the people all that, and that only, which God commanded him to teach them, *ver. 1.* Thus Christ's ministers are to teach his churches *all that he has commanded*, and neither more nor less, *Matth. xxviii. 20.* (2.) That the end of their being taught was, that they might do as they were taught, *ver. 1.* might keep God's statutes, *ver. 2.* and observe to do them, *ver. 3.* Good instructions from parents and ministers will but aggravate our condemnation, if we do not live up to them. (3.) That Moses carefully endeavoured to fix them for God and godliness, now they were entering upon the land of Canaan, that they might be prepared for the comforts of that land, and fortified against the snares of it; and now they were setting out in the world might set out well. (4.) That the fear of God in the heart will be the most powerful principle of obedience, *ver. 2.* That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes. (5.) The entail of religion in a family, or country, is the best entail; it is highly desirable that not we only, but our children, and our children's children, may fear the Lord. (6.) Religion and righteousness advance and secure the prosperity of any people. Fear God, and it shall be well with thee. Those that are well taught, if they do what they are taught, shall be well fed too, as Israel in the land flowing with milk and honey, *ver. 3.*

4. Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD. 5. And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 6. And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. 7. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. 8. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. 9. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. 10. And it shall be when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities which thou buildedst not, 11. And houses full of all good things which thou filledst not, and wells digged which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive-trees, which thou plantedst not, when thou shalt have eaten and be full; 12. Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. 13. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. 14. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; 15. (For the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth. 16. ¶ Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah.

Here is, 1. A brief summary of religion, containing the first principles of faith and obedience, *ver. 4, 5.* These two verses the Jews reckon one of the choicest portions of scripture; they write it in their phylacteries, and think themselves not only obliged to say it at least twice every day, but very happy in being so obliged; having this saying among them, *Blessed are we who every morning and evening say, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.* But more blessed are we, if we duly consider and improve, 1. What we are taught to believe concerning God; That *Jehovah our God is one Jehovah.* (1.) That the God whom we serve is Jehovah, a Being infinitely and eternally perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient. (2.) That he is the one only living and true God: he only is God, and he is but One. The firm belief of this self-evident truth would effectually arm them against all idolatry; which was introduced by that fundamental error, That there are gods many. It is past dispute, that there is one God, and there is no other but he, *Mark xii. 32.* Let us therefore have no other, nor desire to have any other. Some have thought there is here a plain intimation of the Trinity of persons in the Unity of the Godhead; for here is the name of God three times and yet all declared to be one. Happy they that have this one Lord for their God, for they have but one master to please, but one benefactor to seek to. It is better to have one fountain than a thousand cisterns; one all-sufficient God, than a thousand insufficient ones.

2. What we are here taught concerning the duties which God requires of man. It is all summed up in this, as its principle, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.* He had undertook, *ver. 2.* to teach them to fear God, and in pursuance of his undertaking, he here teaches them to love him; for the better affection we have to him, the greater veneration we shall have for him; and the child that honours his parents no doubt loves them. Did ever any prince make a law that his subjects should love him? Yet such is the condescension of the divine grace, that this is made the first and great commandment of God's law, that we love him, and that we perform all other parts of our duty to him from a principle of love; *My son give me thy heart.* We must highly esteem him, be well pleased that there is such a Being, well pleased in all his attributes and relations to us; our desire must be towards him, our delight in him, our dependance upon him, and to him we must be entirely devoted. It must be a constant pleasure to

us to think of him, hear from him, speak to him, and to serve him. We must love him, (1.) As the Lord, the best of Beings, and most excellent and amiable in himself. (2.) As our God, a God in covenant with us, our Father, and the most kind and bountiful of friends and benefactors. We are also commanded to love God *with all our heart, and soul, and might*, that is, we must love him, (1.) With a sincere love: not in word and tongue only, saying we love him, when our hearts are not with him, but inwardly, and in truth, solacing ourselves in him. (2.) With a strong love; the heart must be carried out towards him with great ardour and fervency of affection. Some have from hence thought that we should avoid saying (as we commonly express ourselves) that we will do this or that, with all our heart; for we must not do any thing with all our heart but love God; and that this phrase being here used concerning that sacred fire, it should not be unhallowed. He that is our All must have our all, and none but he. (3.) With a superlative love; we must love God above any creature whatsoever, and love nothing beside him, but what we love for him, and in subordination to him. (4.) With an intelligent love; for so it is explained, *Mark xii. 33.* To love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, we must know him, and therefore love him, as those that see good cause to love him. (5.) With an entire love; he is one, and therefore our hearts must be united in his love; and the whole stream of our affections must run towards him. O that this love of God may be fixed abroad in our hearts!

3. Means are here prescribed for the maintaining and keeping up of religion in our hearts and houses, that it might not wither and go to decay. And they are these:

1. Meditation, *ver. 6.* *These words which I command thee shall be in thy heart.* Though the words alone without the things will do us no good, yet we are in danger of losing the things if we neglect the words, by which ordinarily divine light and power are conveyed to the heart. God's words must be laid up in our hearts, that our thoughts may be daily conversant with them, and employed about them, and thereby the whole soul may be brought to abide and act under the influence and the impression of them. This immediately follows upon the law of *loving God with all our heart*, for they that do so will lay up his word in their hearts, both as an evidence and effect of that love, and as a means to preserve and increase it. He that loves God, loves his Bible.

2. The religious education of children, *ver. 7.* *Thou shalt teach them diligently thy children,* and by communicating thy knowledge thou wilt increase it. They that love the Lord God themselves, should do what they can to engage the affections of their children to him, and so to preserve the entail of religion in their families from being cut off. *Thou shalt teach them diligently upon thy children,* so some read it; frequently repeat these things to them, try all ways of insilling them into their minds, and making them pierce into their hearts. As in whetting a knife it is turned first on this side then on that. Be careful and exact in teaching thy children; and aim, as by whetting to sharpen them, and put an edge upon them. Teach them thy children, not only those of thine own body (say the Jews) but all those that are any way under thy care and tuition. Bishop Patrick well observes here, that Moses thought his law so very plain and easy, that every father might be able to instruct his sons in it, and every mother her daughters. Thus that good thing which is committed to us, we must carefully transmit to those that come after us, that it may be perpetuated.

3. Pious discourse. Thou shalt talk of these things with due reverence and seriousness, for the benefit not only of thy children, but of thy other domestics, thy friends and companions, as thou sittest in the house; either at work, or at meat, or at rest, or to receive visits, and when thou walkest by the way, either for diversion, or for conversation, or in journies, when at night thou art retiring from thy family to lie down for sleep, and when in the morning thou art risen up, and returnest to thy family again. Take all occasion to discourse with those about thee of divine things; not of unrevealed mysteries, or matters of doubtful disputation, but of the plain truths and laws of God, and the things that belong to our peace. So far it is from being reckoned a diminution to the honour of sacred things, to make them the subject of our familiar discourse, that they are recommended to us to be talked of; for the more conversant we are with them, the more we shall admire them, and may thereby be instrumental to communicate divine light and heat.

4. Frequent reading of the word. *They shall be as frontlets between thine eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house,* *ver. 8, 9.* It is probable, at that time there were few written copies, of the whole law, only at the feast of tabernacles the people had it read to them: and therefore God appointed them, at least for the present, to write some select sentences of the law that were most weighty and comprehensive, upon their walls, or in scrolls of parchment to be worn about their wrists, and some think hence the phylacteries so much used among the Jews took rise. Christ blames the Pharisees not for wearing them, but for affecting to have them broader than other people, *Matth. xxiii. 5.* But when Bibles came to be common among them, there was the less occasion for this expedient. It was prudently and piously provided by the first reformers of the English church, that then when Bibles were scarce, some select portions of scripture should be written on the walls and pillars of the churches, which the people might make familiar to them, in conformity to this direction here; which seems to me to have been binding in the letter of it to the Jews, as it is to us in the intent of it, which is, that we should endeavour by all means possible to make the word of God familiar to us, that we may have it ready to us upon all occasions, for our restraint from sin and our direction and excitement to our duty. It must be as that which is graven on the palms of our hands, always before our eyes. See *Prov. vii. 2, 3, 4.* It is also intimated, that we must never be ashamed to own our religion, nor to own ourselves under the check and government of it. Let it be written on our gates, and let every one that goes by our door read it, That we believe Jehovah to be God alone, and believe ourselves bound to love him with all our hearts.

5. A caution is here given not to forget God in a day of prosperity and plenty, *ver. 10, 11, 12.* Here, 1. He raiseth their expectations of the goodness of their God; taking it for granted that he would bring them into the good land that he had promised, *ver. 10.* That they should no longer dwell in tents, as shepherds and poor travellers, but should settle in great and goodly cities, should no longer wander in a barren wilderness, but should enjoy houses well furnished, and gardens well planted, *ver. 11.* and all this without any care or expence of their own, which he here lays a great stress upon, *Cities which thou buildedst not, Houses which thou filledst not, &c.* both because it made the mercy really much more valuable, and what they had came to them so cheap; and yet if they did not actually consider it, the mercy would be the less esteemed, for we are most sensible of the value of that which hath cost us dear. When they came so easily by the gift, they would be apt to grow secure, and unmindful of the giver. 2. He engageth their watchfulness against the badness of their own hearts: *then beware,* when thou liest safe and soft, *lest thou forget the Lord,* *ver. 12.* Note, (1.) In a day of prosperity we are in great danger of forgetting God; our dependance upon him, our need of him, and our obligations to him. When the world smiles

we are apt to make our court to it, and expect our happiness in it, and so we forget him that is our only portion and rest. Agur prays against this temptation, *Prov. xxx. 9. Left I be full and deny thee.* (1.) There is therefore need of great care and caution at such a time, and strict watch over our own hearts. 'Then beware;' being warned of your danger, stand upon your guard against it. *Bind the word of God for a sign upon thy hand,* for this end, to prevent the forgetting God. When thou art settled in Canaan, forget not thy deliverance out of Egypt; but look to the rock out of which thou wast hewn: when thy latter end is greatly increased, remember the smallness of thy beginnings.

4. Some special precepts and prohibitions are here given, which are of great consequence. (1.) They must upon all occasions give honour to God, *ver. 13.* fear him and serve him (for if he be a master we must both reverence him and do his work) and swear by his name, *i. e.* we must not upon any occasional appeal to any other but to him, as the discerners of truth, and avenger of wrong. Swear by him only, and not by any idol, or any other creature. *Swear by his name* in all treaties and covenants with the neighbour nations, and do not compliment them so far as to swear by their gods. *Swearing by his name* is sometimes put for an open profession of his name: *Ish. xlv. 23. Every tongue shall swear,* is expounded, *Rom. xiv. 11. Every tongue shall confess to God.* (2.) They must not upon any occasion give that honour to other gods, *ver. 14. Ye shall not go after other gods, i. e.* ye shall not serve or worship them, for therein they went astray, they went a whoring from the true God; who in this more than in any thing is a jealous God, *ver. 15.* and the learned Bishop Patrick observes here out of a Maimonides, that we never either find in the law or the prophets, anger, or fury, or jealousy or indignation, attributed to God but upon occasion of idolatry. (3.) They must take heed of dishonouring God by tempting him, *ver. 16. Ye shall not tempt the Lord our God, i. e.* ye shall not in any exigence distrust the power, presence, and providence of God, not quarrel with him; which if they indulged an evil heart of unbelief they would take occasion to do in Canaan as well as in the wilderness: No change of condition will cure a disposition to murmur and fret: Our Saviour uses this caution as an answer to one of Satan's temptations, with application to himself, *Math. iv. 7. Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God,* either by despairing of his power and goodness, while we keep in the way of our duty, or by presuming upon it, when we turn aside out of that way.

17. Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee. 18. And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers; 19. To cast out all thine enemies from before thee, as the LORD hath spoken. 20. And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God hath commanded you? 21. Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt, and the LORD brought us up out of Egypt with a mighty hand. 22. And the LORD shewed signs and wonders, great and fore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes. 23. And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers. 24. And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. 25. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.

Here, 1. Moses charges them to keep God's commandments themselves, *ver. 17, 18, 19. You shall diligently keep God's commandments.* Note, It requires a great deal of care and pains to keep up religion in the power of it in our hearts and lives. Negligence will ruin us; but we cannot be saved without diligence. To induce them to this, he here sheweth them, (1.) That this would be very acceptable to God, it is *right and good in the sight of the Lord*; and that is right and good indeed that is so in God's sight. If we have any regard to the favour of our Creator as our felicity, and the law of our creation as our rule, we will be religious. (2.) That it would be very advantageous and profitable to themselves. It would secure to them the possession of the land of Canaan, prosperity there, and constant victory over those that stood in their way. In short, do well, and it shall be well with thee.

2. He chargeth them to instruct their children in the commands of God; not only that they might in their tender years intelligently and affectionately join in religious services, but that afterwards they might in their day keep up religion, and convey it to those that should come after them.

Now, 1. Here is a proper question, which it is supposed the children would ask, *ver. 20. What mean the testimonies and the statutes.* What is the meaning of the feasts we observe, the sacrifices we offer, and the many peculiar customs we keep up? Observe, (1.) All divine institutions have a certain meaning, and there is something great designed in them. (2.) It concerns us to know and understand the meaning of them, that we may perform a reasonable service, and may not offer the blind for sacrifice. (3.) It is good for children betimes to inquire into the true intent and meaning of the religious observances they are trained up in. They that are thus inquisitive in divine things, it is a good sign they are concerned about them, and a good means of their attaining to great acquaintance with them. *Then shall we know, if thus we follow on to know.*

2. Here is a full answer put into parents' mouths to be given to this good question. Parents and teachers must give instructions to those under their charge, though they do not ask it; nay, though they have an aversion to it, much more must they be ready to answer questions, and to give instruction when it is desired; for it may be hoped, they that ask it will be willing to receive it. Did the children ask the meaning of God's laws, let them be told, That they were to be observed, (1.) In a grateful remembrance of God's former favours to them, especially their deliverance out of Egypt, *ver. 21, 22, 23.* The children must be often told of the deplorable state their ancestors were in, when they were bondmen in Egypt, the great salvation God wrought for them in fetching them out thence, and that

God in giving them these peculiar statutes, meant to perpetuate the memorial of that work of wonder, by which they were formed into a peculiar people. (1.) As the prescribed conditions of his farther favours, *ver. 24. The Lord commanded us all these statutes for our good.* Note, God commands us nothing but what is really for our own good: It is our interest as well as our duty to be religious. 1. It will be our life, *that he might preserve us alive,* which is a great favour and more than we could expect, considering how often we have forfeited life itself. Godliness has the promise of the continuance and comfort of the life that now is, as far as it is for God's glory. 2. It would be our righteousness. Could we perfectly fulfil but that one command of loving God with all our heart, soul, and might, and could we say, we had never done otherwise, that would be to our righteousness, as to entitle us to the benefits of the covenants of innocency; had we continued in every thing that is written in the book of the law to do it, the law would have justified us, but that we cannot pretend to, therefore our sincere obedience will be accepted through a mediator, to denominate us, as Noah was, *righteous before God,* *Gen. vii. 1.* Luke i. 6. and 1 John iii. 7. The Chaldee reads it, *There shall be a reward to us, if we observe to do these commandments;* for, without doubt, in keeping God's commandments there is great reward.

C H A P. VII.

Moses in this chapter exhorts Israel, (1.) In general, to keep God's commandments, *ver. 11, 12.* (2.) In particular, and in order to that, to keep themselves pure from all communion with idolaters. 1. They must utterly destroy the seven devoted nations, and not spare them, or make leagues with them, *ver. 1, 2, 16, 24.* 2. They must by no means marry with the remainder of them, *ver. 3, 4.* (3.) They must deface and consume their altars and images, and not so much as take the silver and gold of them to their own use, *ver. 5, 25, 26.* To enforce this charge he shews that they were bound to do so, 1. In duty, *Considering,* (1.) Their election to God, *ver. 6.* (2.) The reason of that election, *ver. 7, 8.* (3.) The terms they stood upon with God, *ver. 9, 10.* 2. An interest. It is here promised, (1.) In general, that if they would serve God, he would bless and prosper them, *ver. 12—15.* (2.) In particular, that if they would drive out the nations, that they might not be a temptation to them, God would drive them out that they should not be any vexation to them, *ver. 17—24.*

1. **W**HEN the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations mightier and greater than thou; 2. And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: 3. Neither shalt thou make marriages with them: thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. 4. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. 5. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. 6. For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. 7. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people (for ye were the fewest of all people) 8. But because the LORD loved you, because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9. Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him, and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations; 10. And repayeth them that hate him, to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to them that hateth him, he will repay him to his face. 11. Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.

Here is, 1. A very strict caution against all friendship and fellowship with idols and idolaters. Those that are taken into communion with God must have no communion with the unfruitful works of darkness. These things they are charged about, for the preventing of this snare now before them.

1. They must shew them no mercy, *ver. 1, 2.* Bloody work is here appointed them, and yet it is God's work, and good work, and in its time and place needful, acceptable, and honourable.

1. God here engageth to do his part. It is spoken of as a thing taken for granted, that God would bring them to the land of promise, that he would cast out the nations before them, who were the present occupants of that land; no room was left to doubt of that. His power is irresistible, and therefore he can do it. His promise is inviolable, and therefore he will do it. Now, (1.) These devoted nations are here named and numbered, *ver. 1.* Seven in all, and seven to one is great odds. They are specified, that Israel might know the bounds and limits of their commission; hitherto their severity must come, but no farther; nor must they under colour of this commission kill all that came in their way; no, here must its waves be stayed.

The confining of this commission to these nations here mentioned, plainly intimates, that after ages were not to draw this into a precedent; this will not serve to justify those barbarous wars which give no quarter. How agreeable forever this method might be when God himself prescribed it, to that dispensation under which such multitudes of beasts were killed and burned in sacrifice; now all sacrifices of atonement are perfected in, and superseded by, the great propitiation made by the blood of Christ, human blood is perhaps become more precious than it was; and those that have most power, yet must not be prodigal of it. (2.) They are here owned to be greater and mightier than Israel. They had been long rooted in this land, to which Israel came strangers; they were more numerous, had men much more bulky, and more expert in war than Israel had; yet all this shall not hinder but that they shall be cast out before Israel. The strength of Israel's enemies magnifies the power of Israel's God, who will certainly be too hard for them.

2. He engageth them to do their part. Thou shalt *smite them and utterly destroy them*, ver. 2. If God cast them out, Israel must not take them in, no, not as tenants, or tributaries, or servants. No covenant of any kind must be made with them, no mercy must be shewed them. This severity was appointed, 1. By way of punishment for the wickedness they and their fathers had been guilty of. The iniquity of the Amorites was now full, and the longer it had been in the silling, the fiercer was the vengeance when it came at last. 2. By way of prevention of the mischiefs they would do to God's Israel, if they were left alive. The people of these abominations must not be mingled with the holy seed, lest they corrupt them. Better all these lives should be lost from the earth, than that religion and the true worship of God should be lost in Israel. Thus we must deal with our lusts that war against our souls; God has delivered them into our hands by that promise, *sin shall not have dominion over you*, unless it be your own faults; let not us then make covenants with them, nor shew them any mercy, but mortify and crucify them, and utterly destroy them.

2. They must make no marriages with those of them that escaped the sword, ver. 3, 4. The families of the Canaanites were ancient, and it is likely some of them were called honourable, which might be a temptation to the Israelites, especially those of them that were of least note in their tribes, to court an alliance with them to mend their blood, and the rather, because their acquaintance with the country might be serviceable to them in the improvement of it; but religion, and the fear of God, must overrule all these considerations. To intermarry with them was therefore unlawful, because it was dangerous; this very thing had proved of fatal consequence to the old world, Gen. v. 2. and thousands in the world that now are have been undone by irreligious and ungodly marriages; for there is more ground for fear in mixed marriages that the good will be perverted, than of hopes that the bad will be converted. The event proved the reasonableness of this warning, *They will turn away thy son from following me*. Solomon paid dear for his folly herein. We find a national repentance for this sin of marrying strange wives, and care taken to reform, Exod. ix. 10. and Neh. ix. 23, &c. and a New Testament caution not to be *unequally yoked with unbelievers*, 2 Cor. vi. 14. Those that in choosing yokefellows keep not at least within the bounds of a justifiable profession of religion, cannot promise themselves helps meet for them. One of the Chaldee paraphrases adds here as a reason of this command, ver. 3. *For he that marries with idolaters doth in effect marry with their idols*.

3. They must destroy all the reliicks of their idolatry, ver. 5. Their altars and pillars, their groves and graven images, all must be destroyed; both in a holy indignation against idolatry, and to prevent infection. This command was given before, Exod. xxxii. 21.—xxxiv. 13. A great deal of good work of this kind was done by the people in their pious zeal, 2 Chron. xxxi. 1. and by good Josiah, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3—7. and with this may be compared the burning of the conjuring books, Acts xix. 19.

2. Here are very good reasons to enforce this caution. 1. The choice God had made of this people for his own, ver. 9. There was such a covenant and communion established between God and Israel, as was not between him and any other people in the world. Shall they by their idolatries dishonour him who had thus honoured them? Shall they slight him, who had thus testified his kindness for them? Shall they put themselves upon the level with other people, when God had thus dignified and advanced them above all people? Had God taken them to be a special people to him, and no other but them, and will not they take God to be a special God to them, and no other but him?

2. The freeness of that grace which made this choice. (1.) There was nothing in them to recommend or entitle them to this favour. *In the multitude of the people is the king's honour*, Prov. xiv. 23. But their number was inconsiderable; they were only seventy souls when they went down into Egypt, and though greatly increased there, yet there were many other nations more numerous; ye were the fewest of all people, ver. 7. The author of the Jerusalem Targum passes too great a compliment upon this nation, in his reading this, *Ye were humble in spirit, and meek above all people*; quite contrary. They were rather stiff-necked, and ill-natured above all people. (2.) God fetched the reason of it purely from himself, ver. 8. (1.) He loved you, because he would love you. Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thine eyes. All that God loves, he loves freely, Hagg. xiv. 4. Those that perish, perish by their own demerits, but all that are saved, are saved by prerogative. (2.) He has done his work because he would keep his word. He has brought you out of Egypt in pursuance of the oath sworn to your fathers. Nothing in them, or done by them, did or could make God a debtor to them, but he had made himself a debtor to his own promise, which he would perform notwithstanding their unworthiness.

3. The tenor of the covenant into which they were taken; it was in short this, That as they were to God, so God would be to them. They should certainly find him, (1.) Kind to his friends, ver. 9. The Lord thy God is not like the gods of the nations, the creatures of fancy, subjects fit enough for loose poetry, but no proper objects of serious devotion; no, he is God, God indeed, God alone, the faithful God; able and ready not only to fulfil his own promises, but to answer all the just expectations of his worshippers, and he will certainly keep covenant with mercy, i. e. shew mercy according to covenant, to them that love him, and keep his commandments. And in vain do we pretend to love him, if we do not make conscience of his commandments; and this, (as is here added for the explication of the promise in the second commandment) not only to thousands of persons, but to thousands of generations. So inexhaustible is the fountain, so constant the streams! (2.) Just to his enemies he repayeth them that hate him, ver. 10. Note, 1. Wicked sinners are haters of God; for the carnal mind is enmity against him. Idolaters are so in a special manner, for they are in league with his rivals. 2. Those that hate God cannot hurt him, but certainly ruin themselves. He will repay them to their face; in defiance of them and all their impotent malice. His arrows are said to be *made ready against the face of them*, Psal. xxi. 12. Or he will bring those judgments upon them, which shall appear to them to be the just punishment of their idolatry. Compare Job xxi. 19. *He regardeth them, and he shall know it*. Though vengeance seem to be slow, yet it is not slack. The wicked and the sinner shall be recom-

pened in the earth, Prov. xi. 31. I cannot pass the gloss of the Jerusalem Targum upon this place, because it speaks the faith of the Jewish church concerning a future state; *He recompenseth to them that hate him the reward of their good works in this world, that he may destroy them in the world to come*.

12. ¶ Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he swore unto thy fathers. 13. And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil; the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee. 14. Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. 15. And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt (which thou knowest) upon thee: but will lay them upon all them that hate thee. 16. And thou shalt consume all the people which the LORD thy God shall deliver thee, thine eyes shall have no pity upon them; neither shalt thou serve their gods: for that will be a snare unto thee. 17. If thou shalt say in thine heart, These nations are more than I, how can I dispossess them? 18. Thou shalt not be afraid of them: but shalt well remember what the LORD thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt: 19. The great temptations which thine eyes saw, and the signs, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the stretched-out arm, whereby the LORD thy God brought thee out: so shall the LORD thy God do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid. 20. Moreover, the LORD thy God will send the hornet among them, until they that are left, and hide themselves from thee, be destroyed. 21. Thou shalt not be affrighted at them: for the LORD thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible. 22. And the LORD thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beast of the field increase upon thee. 23. But the LORD thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed. 24. And he shall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven; there shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou have destroyed them. 25. The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein; for it is an abomination to the LORD thy God. 26. Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thy house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it, for it is a cursed thing.

Here, 1. The caution against idolatry is repeated, and against communion with idolaters, ver. 16. Thou shalt consume the people, and not serve their gods. We are in danger of having fellowship with the works of darkness, if we take pleasure in fellowship with those that do those works. Here is also a repetition of the charge to *destroy the images*, ver. 25, 26. The idols which the heathens had worshipped were an abomination to God, and therefore must be so to them: all that truly love God, hate what he hates. Observe how this is urged upon them, *thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it*; such a holy indignation as this we must conceive against sin, that abominable thing, which the Lord hates. They must not retain the images, either to gratify their covetousness, *Thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is upon them*, nor think it pity to have that destroyed. Achan paid dear for converting that to his own use, which was an anathema. Nor to gratify their curiosity; neither shalt thou bring it into thine house, to be hung up as an ornament, or preserved as a monument of antiquity; No to the fire with it, that is the fittest place for it. Two reasons are given for this caution, Lest thou be snared therein, ver. 25. i. e. lest thou be drawn ere thou art aware, to like it and to love it, to fancy it, and pay respect to it. And lest thou be a cursed thing like it, ver. 26. They that make images, are said to be like unto them, stupid and senseless; here they are said to be in a worse sense like to them, accursed of God, and devoted to destruction. Compare these two reasons together, and observe, that whatever brings us into a snare brings us under a curse.

2. The promise of God's favour to them, if they would be obedient, is enlarged upon with a most affecting copiousness and fluency of expression, which speaks how much it is both God's desire and our own interest, that we be religious. All possible assurance is here given them,

1. That if they would sincerely endeavour to do their part of the covenant, God would certainly perform his part. He shall keep the mercy which he swore to thy fathers, ver. 12. Let us be constant to our duty, and we cannot question the constancy of God's mercy.

2. That if they would love God, and serve him, and devote themselves and theirs to him, he would love them, and bless them, and multiply them greatly, ver. 13, 14. What could they desire more to make them happy? (1.) *He will love thee*. He began to love us, 1 John iv. 21. and if we return his love in filial duty, then and then only we may expect the continuance of it, 1 John xiv. 21. (2.) *He will bless thee with the tokens of his love above all people*. If they would distinguish themselves from their neighbours by singular services, God would dignify them above their neighbours by singular blessings. (3.) *He will multiply thee*. Increase was the ancient blessing for the peopling of the world; once and again, Gen. i. 28.—ix. 1. and here for the peopling of Canaan, that little world by itself. The in-

crease both of their families and of their stock is promised: They should neither have estates without heirs, nor heirs without estates, but should have the complete satisfaction of having many children, and plentiful provisions and portions for them.

3. That if they should keep themselves pure from the idolatries of Egypt, God would keep them clear from the *diseases of Egypt*, ver. 15. It seems to refer not only to those plagues of Egypt, by the force of which they were delivered, but to some other epidemical disease, as we call it, which they remembered the prevalence of amongst the Egyptians, and by which God had chastised them for their national sins. Diseases are God's servants, go where he sends them, and do what he bids them: It is therefore good for the health of our bodies to mortify the sin of our souls.

4. That if they would cut off the devoted nations, they should cut them off, and none should be able to stand before them. Their duty in this matter would itself be their advantage. *Thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee*, that is the precept, ver. 16. And then *The Lord thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them*, that is the promise, ver. 23. Thus we are commanded not to let sin reign, not to indulge themselves in it, or give countenance to it, but to hate it, and strive against it; and then God has promised; that *sin shall not have dominion over us*, Rom. vi. 12—14. But we shall be more than conquerors over it.

The difficulty and doubtfulness of the conquest of Canaan, having been a stone of stumbling to their fathers, he here animates them against those things which were most likely to discourage them, bidding them not to be afraid of them, ver. 18. and again, ver. 21.

1. Let them not be disheartened by the number and strength of their enemies. *Say not, they are more than I, how can I dispossess them?* ver. 17. We are apt to think that the most numerous, must needs be victorious; But to fortify them against this temptation, he minds them of the destruction of Pharaoh, and all the power of Egypt, ver. 18, 19. They had seen the great temptations, or miracles (so the Chaldee reads it) the signs and wonders wherewith God had brought them out of Egypt, in order to his bringing of them into Canaan, and from thence might easily infer both that God would dispossess the Canaanites, who, though formidable enough, had not such advantages against Israel as the Egyptians had; He that had done the greater, could do the lesser; and that he would dispossess them, otherwise his bringing Israel out of Egypt had been no kindness to them. He that begun would finish. *Thou shalt therefore well remember this*, ver. 18. The works and words of God are then well remembered, when they are improved as helps to our faith and obedience. That is well laid up, which is ready to us when we have occasion to use it.

2. Let them not be disheartened by the weakness and deficiency of their own forces; for God would send them in auxiliary troops of hornets, or wasps, as some read it, ver. 20. probably bigger than ordinary, which should so terrify and molest their enemies, and perhaps by the death of many of them, that their most numerous armies should become an easy prey to Israel. God plagued the Egyptians with flies, but the Canaanites with hornets. Those that take not warning by lesser judgments on others, may expect greater on themselves. But their great encouragement was, that they had God among them, a *mighty God and terrible*, ver. 2. And if God be for us, it God be with us, we need not fear the power of any creature against us.

3. Let them not be disheartened by the slow progress of their arms, nor think the Canaanites would never be subdued, if they were not expelled the first year; no, they must be put out by little and little, and not all at once, ver. 22. Note, We must not think that because the deliverance of the Church, and the destruction of its enemies is not effected presently, therefore it will never be effected; God will do his own work in his own method and time; and we may be sure that is always the best. Thus corruption is driven out of the hearts of believers by little and little. The work of sanctification is carried on gradually; but that judgment will at length be brought forth into a complete victory. The reason here given (as before, *Exod. xiii. 29, 30.*) is, *Left the beast of the field increase upon thee*. The earth God has given to the children of men; and therefore there shall rather be a remainder of Canaanites to keep possession till Israel become numerous enough to replenish it, than that it should be a habitation of dragons; and a court for the wild beasts of the desert, *Isa. xxxiv. 13.* Yet God could have prevented this mischief from the beasts, *Lev. xxvi. 6.* But pride and security, and other sins that are the common effects of a settled prosperity, were the enemies more dangerous than the beasts of the field, that would be apt to increase upon them. See *Judges iii. 1—4.*

C H A P. VIII.

Moses had charged parents in teaching their children, to what the word of God upon them, chap. vi. 7. by frequent repetition of the same things, over and over again; and here he himself takes the same method in instructing the Israelites, as his children; frequently inculcating the same precepts and cautions, with the same motives, or arguments to enforce them; and what they heard so often might abide with them. In this chapter Moses gives them, 1. General exhortations to obedience, ver. 1—6. 2. A review of the great things God had done for them in the wilderness, as a good argument for obedience, ver. 2—5. and ver. 15—16. 3. A prospect of the good land into which God would now bring them, ver. 7, 8, 9. 4. A necessary caution against the temptations of a prosperous condition, ver. 10—14. and 17, 18. 5. A fair warning of the fatal consequences of apostasy from God, ver. 19, 20.

1. **A**LL the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swears unto your fathers. 2. And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no, 3. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna (which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know) that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. 4. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these forty years. 5. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that as a man

chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee. 6. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. 7. For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains, and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; 8. A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates, a land of oil-olive, and honey: 9. A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.

The charge here given them, is the same as before, to keep and do all God's commandments: 1. Their obedience must be, 1. Careful, *observe to do.* (2.) Universal, *to do all the commandments*, ver. 1. And, (3.) From a good principle, with a regard to God, as the Lord, and their God, and particularly with a holy fear of him, ver. 6. from a reverence of his majesty, a submission to his authority, and a dread of his wrath.

To engage them to his obedience, besides the great advantages of it, which he sets before them, ver. 1. That they should live and multiply, and all should be well with them; he directs them,

1. To look back upon the wilderness, through which God had now brought them, ver. 2. *Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness.* Now they were come to age, and were entering upon their inheritance, they must be minded of the discipline they had been under during their minority, and the method God had taken to train them up for himself. The wilderness was the school in which they had for forty years been boarded and taught, under tutors and governors: and now was a time to bring all this to remembrance. The occurrences of these last forty years were, (1.) Very memorable, and well worthy to be remembered. (2.) Very useful and profitable to be remembered, as yielding a complication of arguments for obedience. And, (3.) They were recorded on purpose that they might be remembered. As the feast of the passover was a memorial of their deliverance out of Egypt, so the feast of tabernacles was of their passage through the wilderness. Note, It is very good for us to remember all the ways both of God's providence and grace, by which he hath led us hitherto through this wilderness, that we may be prevailed with cheerfully to serve him and trust in him. Here let us set up our Ebenezer.

1. They must remember the straits they were sometimes brought into; (1.) For the mortifying of their pride, it was to humble them; that they might not be exalted above measure with the abundance of miracles that were wrought in their favour, and that they might not be secure, and confident of being in Canaan presently. (2.) For the manifesting of their perverseness, to prove them, that they and others might know (for God himself perfectly knew it before) all that was in their heart, and might see that God chose them, not for any thing in them that might recommend them to his favour, for their whole carriage was disobliging. Many commandments God gave them which there had been no occasion for, if they had not been led through the wilderness, as those relating to the manna, *Exod. xvi. 28.* and God thereby tried them, as our first parents were tried by the trees of the garden, whether they would keep God's commandments or no. Or, God thereby proved them, whether they would trust his promises, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations, and in dependence on his promises obey his precepts.

2. They must remember the supplies which were always granted them. God himself took particular care of their food, raiment, and health; and what would they have more?

(1.) They had manna for food, ver. 3. *God suffered them to hunger*, and then fed them with manna, that the extremity of their want might make their supply the more acceptable, and God's goodness to them therein the more remarkable. God often brings his people low that he may have the honour of helping them. And thus the manna of heavenly comforts is given to them that *hunger and thirst after righteousness*, *Matth. v. 6.* *To the hungry soul every thing is sweet.* It is said of the manna, that it was a sort of food which neither they nor their fathers knew. And again, ver. 16. if they knew there was such a thing that fell sometimes with the dew in those countries, as some think they did, yet it was never known to fall in such vast quantities, so constantly, and at all seasons of the year, so long, and only about a certain place: These things were altogether miraculous, and without precedent, *The Lord created a new thing* for their supply. And hereby he taught them, that man liveth not by bread alone; though God hath appointed bread for the strengthening of man's heart, and that is ordinarily made the staff of life, yet God can, when he pleases, command support and nourishment without it, and make something else very unlikely to answer the intention as well. We might live upon air if it were sanctified for that use by the word of God; for the means God ordinarily useth he is not tied to, but can perform his kind promises to his people without them. Our Saviour quotes this scripture in answer to that temptation of Satan, *command that these stones be made bread.* What needs that? saith Christ, my heavenly Father can keep me alive without bread, *Matth. v. 3, 4.* Let none of God's children distrust their Father, nor take any sinful indirect course for the supply of their own necessities, some way or other God will provide for them in the way of duty and honest diligence, and verily they shall be fed. It may be applied spiritually; the word of God, as it is the revelation of God's will and grace duly received, and entertained by faith, is the food of the soul; the life which is supported by that is the life of man, and not only that life which is supported by bread. The manna typified Christ, the bread of life. He is the word of God; by him we live; the Lord evermore give us that bread which endures to eternal life, and let us not be put off with the meat that perisheth!

2. The same clothes served them from Egypt to Canaan, at least the generality of them. Though they had not change of raiment, yet it was always new, and waxed not old upon them, ver. 4. This was a standing miracle, and the greater, if, as the Jews say, they grew with them, so as to be always fit for them. But it is plain they brought out of Egypt bundles of clothes on their shoulders, *Exod. xii. 34.* which they might barter with each other as there was occasion, and those, with what they wore, sufficed till they came into a country where they could furnish themselves with new clothes.

Now by the method God took of providing food and raiment for them, (1.) He humbled them. It was a mortification to them to be tied for forty years together to the same meat, without any varieties, and to be in the same clothes, in the same fashion. Thus he taught them, that the good things he designed for them were figures of better things; and that the happiness of men consists not in being clothed in purple or fine linen, and in *glaring sumptuously every day*, but by being taken into covenant and communion with

with God, and in *learning his righteous judgments*, God's law which was given to Israel in the wilderness, must be to them instead of food and raiment. (2.) He proved them, whether they could trust him to provide for them then, when means and second causes failed. Thus he taught them to live in a dependance upon providence, and not to perplex themselves with care *what they should eat and drink*; and *wherewithal they should be clothed*. Christ would have his disciples learn the same lesson, *Matth. vi. 25.* and took a like method to teach it them, when he sent them out without purse or scrip, and yet took care that they lacked nothing, *Luke xxii. 35.* (3.) God took care of their health and ease. Though they travelled on foot in a dry country; the way rough and untrodden, yet their *feet swelled not*; God preserved them from taking hurt by the inconveniencies of their journey: and mercies of that kind we ought to acknowledge. Note, Those that follow God's conduct are not only safe, but easy. Our feet swell not while we keep in the way of duty; it is the way of transgression that is hard, *Prov. xiii. 15.* God has promised to keep the feet of his saints, *1 Sam. ii. 9.*

4. They must also remember the rebukes they had been under, *ver. 5.* During these years of their education they had been kept under a strict discipline, and not without need. *As a man chasteneth his son*, for his good, and because he loves him, *so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.* God is a loving, tender father to all his children, yet when there is occasion they shall feel the smart of the rod. Israel did so; they were chastened that they might not be condemned; chastened with the rod of men. Not as a man wounds and slays his enemies whose destruction he aims at, but as a man chasteneth his son, whose happiness and welfare he designs; so did their God chasten them; he chastened and taught them, *Psal. xciv. 12.* This they must consider in their heart, *i. e.* They must own it from their own experience; that God had corrected them with a fatherly love, for which they must return to him a filial reverence and compliance. Because God has chastened thee as a father, *Therefore, ver. 6. thou shalt keep his commandments.* This use we should make of all our afflictions; by them let us be engaged and quickened to our duty. Thus they are directed to look back upon the wilderness.

2. He directs them to look forward to Canaan, into which God was now bringing them. Look which way we will both our reviews and our prospects will furnish us with arguments for obedience. The land which they were now going to take possession of, is here described to be a very good land, *ver. 7, 8, 9.* There was every thing in it that was desirable. (1.) *It was well watered like Eden; the garden of the Lord.* It was a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths, which contributed to the fruitfulness of the soil. Perhaps there was more plenty of water there now than had been in Abraham's time, the Canaanites having found and digged wells; so that Israel reaped the fruit of their industry as well as of God's bounty. (2.) The ground produced great plenty of all good things, not only for the necessary support, but for the convenience and comfort of human life. In their fathers' land they had bread enough; it was corn land, a land of wheat and barley, where, with the common care and labour of the husbandman, they might eat bread without scarceness. It was a fruitful land, that was never turned into barrenness but for the iniquity of them that dwelt therein. They had not only water enough to quench their thirst, but vines, the fruit whereof was ordained to make glad the heart. And were they desirous of dainties, they needed not send to far countries for them, when their own was so well stocked with fig-trees and pomegranates, olives of the best kind, and honey, or date-trees, as some think it should be read. (3.) Even the bowels of its earth were very rich, though it should seem that *silver and gold they had none*; of these the princes of Sheba should bring presents, *Psal. lxxii. 15.* yet they had plenty of those more serviceable metals, iron, and brass. Iron-stone, and mines of brass were found in their hills. See *Job xxviii. 2.*

Now these things are mentioned, (1.) To shew the great difference between that wilderness through which God had led them, and the good land into which he was bringing them. Note, Those that bear the inconveniencies of an afflicted state with patience and submission, are humbled by them, prove well under them, and are best prepared for better circumstances. (2.) To shew what obligations they lay under to keep God's commandments, both in gratitude for his favour to them, and an interest, that the favours might be continued. The only way to keep possession of this good land would be to keep in the way of their duty. (3.) To shew what a figure it was of good things to come. Whatever others saw, it is probable Moses in it saw a type of the better country; The Gospel-Church is the New Testament Canaan, watered with the Spirit in his gifts and graces, planted with the trees of righteousness, bearing the fruits of righteousness. Heaven is the good land, in which there is nothing wanting, and where there is fulness of joy.

10. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. 11. Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day. 12. Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; 13. And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied: 14. Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God (which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; 15. Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; 16. Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end.) 17. And thou say in thine heart, My power, and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. 18. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he swore unto thy fathers, as it is this day. 19. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day, that ye shall surely perish. 20. As the nations

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which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish: because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.

Moses having mentioned the great plenty they would find in the land of Canaan, finds it necessary to caution them against the abuse of that plenty, which was a sin they would be the more prone to, now they came into that vineyard of the Lord, immediately out of a barren desert.

1. He directs them to the duty of a prosperous condition, *ver. 10.* They are allowed to eat, even to fulness; not to surfeiting or excess; But let them always remember their benefactor, the founder of their feast, and never fail to give thanks after meat, *Then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God.* (1.) They must take heed of eating or drinking so much as to indispose themselves for this duty of blessing God, but rather serve God therein with so much the more cheerfulness and enlargement. (2.) They must not have any fellowship with those that, when they had eaten and were full, blessed false gods, as the Israelites themselves had done in the worship of the golden calf, *Exod. xxxii. 6.* (3.) Whatever they had the comfort of, God must have the glory of. As our Saviour hath taught us to bless before we eat, *Matth. xiv. 19, 20.* so we are here taught to bless after meat. That is our Hosannah, God bless; this is our Hallelujah, blessed be God. *In every thing we must give thanks.* From this law the religious Jews took up a laudable usage of blessing God, not only at their solemn meals, but upon other occasions; if they drank of a cup of wine, they lifted up their hands, and said, *Blessed be he that made the fruit of the vine to make glad the heart*; If they but smelt a flower, they said, *Blessed be he that made this flower sweet.* (4.) When they gave thanks for the fruit of the land they must give thanks for the good land itself, which was given them by promise. From all our comfortable enjoyments, we must take occasion to thank God for comfortable settlements; and I know not but we of this nation, have as much reason as they had to give thanks for a good land.

2. He arms them against the temptations of a prosperous condition, and charges them to stand upon their guard against them; when thou art settled in goodly houses of thy own building, *ver. 12.* (for though God gave them houses which they builded not, *chap. vi. 10.* those would not serve them, they must have larger and finer) and when thou art grown rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold, *ver. 13.* as Abraham, *Gen. xlii. 2.* when all thou hast is multiplied.

1. Then take heed of pride. Beware lest then thy heart be lifted up, *ver. 14.* when the estate riseth, the mind is apt to rise with it, in self-conceit, self-complacency, and self-confidence. Let us therefore strive to keep the spirit low in a high condition; humility is both the ease and ornament of prosperity. Take heed of saying so much as in thine heart that proud word, *My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth,* *ver. 17.* Note, We must never take the praise of our prosperity to ourselves, nor attribute it to our ingenuity or industry; for bread is not always *to the wife*, nor riches *to men of understanding*, *Ecc. ix. 11.* It is spiritual idolatry, thus to *justify to our own net*, *Heb. i. 16.*

2. Then take heed of forgetting God, This follows upon the *lifting up of the heart*; for it is through the pride of the countenance, that the wicked seeks not after God, *Psal. x. 4.* Those that admire themselves, despise God.

(1.) Forget not thy duty to God, *ver. 11.* We forget God, if we keep not his commandments; we forget his authority over us and our obligations to him, and expectations from him, if we be not obedient to his laws. When men grow rich they are tempted to think religion a needless thing; they are happy without it, think it a thing below them, and too hard upon them; their dignity forbids them to stoop, and their liberty forbids them to serve. But we are basely ungrateful, if the better God is to us, the worse we are to him.

2. Forget not God's former dealings with thee. Thy deliverance out of Egypt, *ver. 14.* The provision he made for thee in the wilderness, that great and terrible wilderness, they must never forget the impressions which the horror of that wilderness made upon them, see *Jer. ii. 6.* where it is called the very shadow of death. There God preserved them from being destroyed by the fiery serpents and scorpions, though sometimes he made use of them for their correction; there he kept them from perishing for want of water, following them with water out of a rock of flint, *ver. 15.* Out of which (saith Bishop Patrick) one would rather have expected fire than water. There he fed them with manna, of which before, *ver. 3.* taking care to keep them alive, that he might do them good at their latter end, *ver. 16.* Note, God reserves the best till the last for his Israel. However, he may seem to deal hardly with them by the way, he will not fail to do them good at their latter end.

(3.) Forget not God's hand in thy present prosperity, *ver. 18.* Remember it is he that giveth thee wealth; for he giveth thee power to get wealth. See here how God's giving, and our getting are reconciled, and apply it to spiritual wealth. It is our duty to get wisdom, and above all our gettings to get understanding, and yet it is God's grace that gives wisdom, and when we have got it, we must not say, it was the might of our hand that got it, but must own, it was God that gave us power to get it, and therefore to him we must give the praise, and consecrate the use of it.

The blessing of the Lord, on the hand of the diligent makes rich, both for this world and for the other. He giveth thee power to get wealth, not so much to gratify thee, and make thee easy, as that he may establish his covenant. All God's gifts are in pursuance of his promises.

Lastly, He repeats the fair warning he had often given them of the fatal consequences of their apostacy from God, *ver. 12, 20.* Observe, (1.) How he describes the sin; it is forgetting God, and then worshipping other gods. What wickedness will not they fall into that keep thoughts of God out of their mind? And when once the affections are displaced from God, they will soon be misplaced upon lying vanities. (2.) How he denounces wrath and ruin against them for it; if you do so, ye shall surely perish, and the power and might of your hands, you are so proud of, cannot help you. Nay, you shall perish as the nations that are driven before you. God will make no more account of you, notwithstanding his covenant with you, and your relation to him, than he doth of them, if you will not be obedient and faithful to him. They that follow others in sin, will certainly follow them to destruction. If we do as sinners do, we must expect to fare as sinners fare.

C H A P. IX.

The design of Moses in this chapter, is to convince the people of Israel of their utter unworthiness to receive from God those great favours that were now to be conferred upon them; writing this, as it were, in capital letters, at the head of their chapter, Not for your sake, be it known unto you, *Ezek. xxxvi. 32.* He assures them of victory over their enemies, *ver. 1—3.* 2. He cautions them

them not to attribute their successes to their own merit, but to God's justice, which was engaged against their enemies, and his faithfulness, which was engaged to their fathers, ver. 4—6. 3. To make it evident, that they had no reason to boast of their own righteousness, he rips up their faults, shews Israel their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins. In general, they had been all along a provoking people, ver. 7—24. In particular, 1. In the matter of the golden calf, the story of which he largely relates, ver. 8—21. 2. He mentions some other instances of their rebellion, ver. 22, 33. And, 3. Returns, at ver. 25, to speak of the intercession he had made for them at Horeb, to prevent their being ruined for the golden calf.

1. **H**EAR, O Israel: Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven. 2. A people great and tall, the children of the Anakims, whom thou knowest, and of whom thou hast heard say, Who can stand before the children of Anak! 3. Understand therefore this day, that the LORD thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the LORD hath said unto thee. 4. Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee. 5. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 6. Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it, for thy righteousness, for thou art a stiff-necked people.

The call to attention, ver. 1. *Hear, O Israel*, intimates, this was a new discourse, delivered at some distance of time after the former, probably, the next sabbath-day.

1. He represents to them the formidable strength of the enemies which they were now to encounter, ver. 1. The nations they were to dispossess were mightier than themselves, not a rude and undisciplined rout, like the natives of America, they were easily made a prey of. But should they besiege them, they would find their cities well fortified, according as the art of fortification then was: should they engage them in the field, they would find the people great and tall, of whom common fame had reported, that there was no standing before them, ver. 2. This representation is much the same with that which evil spies had made, *Numb. xiii. 28—33.* but made with a very different intention: that was designed to drive them from God, and to discourage their hope in him; this to drive them to God and engage their hope in him; since no power less than that which is Almighty could secure and succeed them.

2. He assures them of victory, by the presence of God with them, notwithstanding the strength of the enemy, ver. 3. Understand therefore what thou must trust to for success, and which way thou must look; it is the Lord thy God that goes before thee, not only as thy captain, or commander in chief to give direction, but as a consuming fire, to do execution among them. Observe, 1. He shall destroy them, and then thou shalt drive them out. Thou canst not drive them out unless he destroy them, and bring them down. But he will not destroy them, and bring them down, unless thou set thyself in good earnest to drive them out. We must do our endeavour in dependence upon God's grace, and we shall have that grace, if we do our endeavour.

3. He cautions them not to entertain the least thought of their own righteousness, as if that had procured them this favour at God's hand. Say not, for my righteousness, either with regard to my good character, or in recompense for any good service, *the Lord has brought me in to possess this land*, ver. 4. never think it is for thy righteousness or the uprightness of thy heart, that it is for and in consideration either of thy good conversation, or of thy good disposition, ver. 5. And again, ver. 6. it is insisted on, because it is hard to bring people from a conceit of their own merit, and yet very necessary that it be done, understand, know it and believe it, and consider it, that *the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land for thy righteousness*. Hadst thou been to come to it upon that condition, thou hadst been for ever shut out of it, for thou art a stiff-necked people. Note, Our gaining possession of the heavenly Canaan, as it must be attributed to God's power, and not to our own might, so it must be ascribed to God's grace, and not to our own merit; In Christ we have both *righteousness and strength*, in him therefore we must glory, and not in ourselves, or any sufficiency of our own.

4. He intimates to them the true reasons why God would take this good land out of the hands of the Canaanites, and settle it upon Israel, and they are borrowed from his own honour, not from Israel's deserts. 1. He will be honoured in the destruction of idolaters; they are justly looked upon as haters of him, and therefore he will visit their iniquity upon them. It is for the wickedness of these nations that God drives them out, ver. 4. and again, ver. 5. All those whom God rejects, are rejected for their own wickedness; but none of those whom he accepts are accepted for their own righteousness. 2. He will be honoured in the performance of his promise to those that are in covenant with him; God swore to the patriarchs who loved him, and left all to follow him, that he would give this land to their seed; and therefore he would keep that promised mercy for thousands of them that loved him and kept his commandments: he would not suffer his promise to fail. It was for their fathers' sakes that they were beloved, *Rom. xi. 28.* Thus boasting is for ever excluded. See *Eph. i. 9—11.*

7. ¶ Remember, and forget not, how thou provokest the LORD thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious

against the LORD. 8. Also in Horeb ye provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry with you to have destroyed you. 9. When I was gone up into the mount, to receive the tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant which the LORD made with you, then I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights, I neither did eat bread nor drink water: 10. And the LORD delivered unto me two tables of stone written with the finger of God, and on them was written according to all the words which the LORD spake with you in the mount, out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly. 11. And it came to pass at the end of forty days and forty nights, that the LORD gave me the two tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant. 12. And the LORD said unto me, Arise, get thee down quickly from hence; for thy people which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt, have corrupted themselves; they are quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten image. 13. Furthermore, the LORD spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. 14. Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they. 15. So I turned and came down from the mount, and the mount burned with fire: and the two tables of the covenant were in my two hands. 16. And I looked, and, behold, ye had sinned against the LORD your God; and had made you a molten calf: ye had turned aside quickly out of the way which the LORD had commanded you. 17. And I took the two tables, and cast them out of my two hands, and brake them before you eyes. 18. And I fell down before the LORD as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I did neither eat bread nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. 19. (For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the LORD was wrath against you to destroy you.) But the LORD hearkened unto me at that time also. 20. And the LORD was very angry with Aaron, to have destroyed him; and I prayed for Aaron also the same time. 21. And I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, and ground it very small, even until it was as small as dust; and I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount. 22. And at Taberah, and at Massah, and at Kibroth-hattaavah, ye provoked the LORD to wrath. 23. Likewise when the LORD sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, Go up and possess the land which I have given you: then you rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and ye believed him not, nor hearkened to his voice. 24. Ye have been rebellious against the LORD, from the day that I knew you. 25. Thus I fell down before the LORD forty days and forty nights, as I fell down at the first; because the LORD had said he would destroy you. 26. I prayed therefore unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, destroy not thy people, and thine inheritance which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand. 27. Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin: 28. Lest the land whence thou broughtest us out, say, Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness. 29. Yet they are thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power, and by thy stretched out arm.

That they might have no pretence to think that God brought them to Canaan for their righteousness, he here shews them what a miracle of mercy it was, that they had not long before this been destroyed in the wilderness; remember and forget not, how thou provokest the Lord thy God, ver. 7. so far from purchasing his favour, that thou hast many a time laid thyself open to his displeasure. Their fathers' provocations are here charged upon them; for if God dealt with their fathers according to their deserts, this generation had never been, much less had they entered Canaan. We are apt to forget our provocations, especially when the smart of the rod is over, and have need to be often put in mind of them, that we may never entertain any conceit of our own righteousness. St. Paul argues from the guilt all mankind is under, to prove, that we cannot be justified before God by our own works, *Rom. iii. 19, 20.* If our works condemn us, they will not justify us.

1. They had been a provoking people ever since they came out of Egypt, ver. 7. Forty years long from first to last were God and Moses grieved with them. It is a very sad character Moses now at parting leaves of them, ver. 24. You have been rebellious from the day I knew you. No sooner were they

they formed into a people, but there was faction formed among them, which upon all occasions made head against God and his government. Though the Mosaic history records little more than the occurrences of the first and last year of the forty, yet it seems by this general account that the rest of the years were not much better, but one continued provocation.

2. Even in Horeb they made a calf and worshipped it, *ver. 8, &c.* That was a sin so heinous and by several aggravations made so exceeding sinful, that they deserved upon all occasions to be upbraided with it. It was done in the very place, where the law was given, by which they were expressly forbidden to worship God by images; and while the mountain was yet burning before their eyes, and Moses was gone up to fetch them the law in writing. They turned aside quickly, *ver. 16.*

3. God was very angry with them for their sin. Let not them think that God overlooked what they did amiss, and gave them Canaan for what was good among them: No, God had determined to destroy them, *ver. 8.* could easily have done it, and have been no loser by it; bespoke Moses to let him alone that he might do it, *ver. 13, 14.* By this it appeared how heinous their sin was, for God is never angry with any above what there is cause for, as men often are. Moses himself thought a friend and favourite, trembled at the revelation of God's wrath from heaven, against their ungodliness and unrighteousness, *ver. 19.* *I was afraid of the anger of the Lord; afraid perhaps not for them only, but for himself, Psal. cxix. 120.*

4. They had by their sin broken covenant with God, and forfeited all the privileges of the covenant, which Moses signified to them by breaking the tables, *ver. 17.* A bill of divorce was given them, and from thenceforward they might justly have been abandoned for ever; so that their mouth was certainly stopped from pleading any righteousness of their own. God had, in effect, disowned them, when he said to Moses, *ver. 12.* They are thy people, they are none of mine, nor shall they be dealt with as mine.

5. Aaron himself fell under God's displeasure for it, though he was the saint of the Lord, and was only brought by surprize or terror, to be confederate with them in their sin, *ver. 20.* *The Lord was very angry with Aaron.* No man's place or character can shelter him from the wrath of God, if he have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Aaron, that should have made atonement for them, if the iniquity could have been purged away by sacrifice and offering, did himself fall under the wrath of God: so little did they consider what they did, when they drew him in.

6. It was with great difficulty and very long attendance, that Moses himself prevailed to turn away the wrath of God and prevent their utter ruin. He fasted and prayed full forty days and forty nights before he could obtain their pardon, *ver. 18.* And some think, twice forty days, *ver. 25.* because it is said, as I fell down before; whereas his errand in the first forty was not of that nature. Others think, it was but one forty, though twice mentioned, and again, *chap. x. 10.* But that was enough to make them sensible how great God's displeasure was against them, and what a narrow turn they had for their lives. And by this appears the greatness of God's anger against all mankind, that no less a person than his Son, and no less a price than his own blood, would serve to turn it away. Moses here tells them the substance of his intercession for them. He was obliged to own their stubbornness, and their wickedness, and their sin, *ver. 27.* Their character was bad indeed, when he that appeared an advocate for them, could not give them a good word; and had nothing else to say in their behalf, but that God had done great things for them, which really did but aggravate their crime, *ver. 26.* that they were the posterity of good ancestors, *ver. 27.* which might also have been turned upon him, as making the matter worse and not better; and that the Egyptians would reproach God if he should destroy them, as unable to perfect what he had wrought for them, *ver. 28.* a plea which might easily enough have been answered: no matter what the Egyptians say, while the heavens declare God's righteousness. So that the saving of them from ruin at that time, was owing purely to the mercy of God, and the importunity of Moses, and not to any merit of theirs, that could be offered so much as in mitigation of their offence.

7. To affect them the more with the destruction they were then at the brink of, he describes the destruction of the calf they had made very particularly, *ver. 21.* He calls it their sin, perhaps not only because it had been the matter of their sin, but because the destroying of it was intended for a testimony against their sin; and an indication to them, what the sinners themselves did deserve. They that made it were like unto it, and had had no wrong done them, if they had been thus stamped to dust and consumed, and scattered, and no remains of them left. It was infinite mercy that accepted the destruction of the idol, instead of the destruction of the idolaters.

8. Even after this fair escape that they had, in many other instances they provoked the Lord again and again. He needed only to name the places, for they carried the memorials either of the sin or of the punishment in their names, *ver. 22.* at Taberah, burning, where God set fire to them for their murmuring; at Massah, the temptation, where they challenged almighty power to help them; and at Kibroth-Hataavah, the graves of lusts, where the dainties they coveted were their poison. And after these, their unbelief and distrust at Kadesh-barnea, which he had already told them of, *chap. i.* and here mentions again, *ver. 23.* had certainly completed their ruin, if they had been dealt with according to their own merits.

Now let them lay all this together, and it will appear, that whatever favour God should hereafter shew them, in subduing their enemies, and putting them in possessing of the land of Canaan, it was not for their righteousness. It is good for us often to remember against ourselves, with sorrow and shame, our former sins, and to review the record conscience keeps of them, that we may see how much we are indebted to free grace, and may humbly own, that we never merited at God's hand any thing but wrath and the curse.

C H A P. X.

Moses having in the foregoing chapter minded them of their own sin as a reason why they should not depend upon their own righteousness; in this chapter sets forth God's great mercy towards them notwithstanding their provocations, as a reason why they should be more obedient for the future. 1. He mentions divers tokens of God's favour and reconciliation to them, never to be forgotten. (1.) The renewing of the tables of the covenant, *ver. 1—5.* (2.) Giving orders for their progress towards Canaan, *ver. 6, 7.* (3.) Choosing the tribe of Levi for his own, *ver. 8, 9.* And continuing the priesthood after the death of Aaron, *ver. 6.* (4.) Owning and accepting the intercession of Moses for them, *ver. 10, 11.* 2. From hence he infers what obligations they lay under to fear, and love, and serve God, which he presses upon them with many motives, *ver. 12—22.*

1. **A**T that time the LORD said unto me, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first, and come up unto me into the mount, and make thee an ark of wood. 2. And I will write on the tables the words which were in the first tables which thou brakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark. 3. And I made an ark of shittim-wood, and hewed two tables of stone like unto the first, and went up into the mount having the two tables in mine hand. 4. And he wrote on the tables according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the LORD spake unto you in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, in the day of the assembly: and the LORD gave them unto me. 5. And I turned myself and came down from the mount, and put the tables in the ark which I had made, and there they be, as the LORD commanded me. 6. ¶ And the children of Israel took their journey from Beeroth of the children of Jaakan, to Mosera: there Aaron died, and there he was buried: and Eleazar his son ministered in the priest's office in his stead. 7. From thence they journeyed unto Gudgodah; and from Gudgodah to Jotbath, a land of rivers of waters. 8. ¶ At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister unto him, and to bless in his name unto this day. 9. Wherefore Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; the LORD is his inheritance, according as the LORD thy God promised him. 10. And I stayed in the mount, according to the first time, forty days and forty nights, and the LORD hearkened unto me that time also, and the LORD would not destroy thee. 11. And the LORD said unto me, Arise, take thy journey before the people, that they may go in, and possess the land which I swore unto their fathers to give unto them.

There were four things in and by which God shewed himself reconciled to Israel, and made them truly great and happy; and in which God's goodness took occasion from their badness to make himself the more illustrious.

1. He gave them this law; gave it them in writing: as a standing pledge of his favour. Though the tables that were first written were broken, because they had broken the commandments, and God might justly break the covenant; yet when his anger was turned away, the tables were renewed, *ver. 1, 2.* Note, God's putting his law in our hearts, and writing it in our inward parts, is the surest evidence of our reconciliation to God, and the best earnest of our happiness in him. Moses is bid to hew the tables; for the law prepares the heart by conviction and humiliation for the Grace of God, but it is only that grace that then writes the law in it. Moses made an ark of shittim-wood, *ver. 3.* a plain chest, the same, I suppose, in which the tables were afterwards preserved: but Bezaleel is said to make it, *Exod. xxxvi. 1.* because he afterwards finished it up, and overlaid it with gold. Or, Moses is said to make it, because when he went up the second time into the mount, he ordered it to be made by Bezaleel against he came down. And it is observable, that for this reason the ark was the first thing that God gave orders about, *Exod. xxv. 10.* And this left an earnest to the congregation, that the tables should not miscarry this second time, as they had done the first. God will send his law and gospel to those whose hearts are prepared as arks to receive them. Christ is the ark in which now our salvation is kept safe, that it may not be lost, as it was in the first Adam, when he had it in his own hand.

Observe, (1.) What it was that God wrote on the two tables; the ten commandments, *ver. 4.* or ten words; intimating in how little a compass they were contained: they were not ten volumes, but ten words; it was the same in the first writing, and both the same that he spake in the mount. The second edition needed no correction or amendment; nor did what he wrote differ from what he spoke; the written word is as truly the word of God, as that which he spake to his servants the prophets. (2.) What care was taken of it. These two tables thus engraven, were faithfully laid up in the ark. And there they be, saith Moses, pointing, it is probable towards the sanctuary, *ver. 5.* That good thing which was committed to him, he transmitted to them, and left it pure and entire in their hands, now let them look to it at their peril. Thus we may say to the rising generation. God has intrusted us with Bibles, sabbaths, sacraments, &c. as tokens of his presence and favour, and there they be; we lodge them with you, *2 Tim. i. 13, 14.*

2. He led them forwards towards Canaan, though they in their hearts turned back towards Egypt, and he might justly have chosen their delusions *ver. 6, 7.* He brought them to a land of rivers of waters, out of a dry and barren wilderness: sometimes God supplied their wants by an ordinary course of nature; when that failed, then by miracles; and yet after this when they were brought into a little distress, we find them distrusting God and murmuring, *Numb. xx. 3, 4.*

2. He appointed a standing ministry among them, to deal for them in holy things. At that time, when Moses went up a second time to the mount, or soon after, he had orders to separate the tribe of Levi to God and to his immediate service, they have distinguished themselves by their zeal against the worshippers of the golden calf, *ver. 8, 9.* The Kohathites carried the ark; they and the other Levites stood before the Lord, to minister to him in all the offices of the tabernacle; and the priests who were of that tribe, were to bless the people. This was a standing ordinance which had now continued almost forty years, even unto this day: and provision was made for the perpetuation of it, by the settled maintenance of that tribe, which was such as gave them great encouragement in their work, and no diversion from it. The Lord is his inheritance. Note, A settled ministry is a great blessing to a people, and a special token of God's favour. And since the particular priest could not continue by reason of death, God shewed his care of the people in securing a succession, which Moses takes notice of here, *ver. 6.* When Aaron died, the priesthood did not die with him, but Eleazar his son ministered in his stead, and took care of the ark in which the tables of stone, those precious stones were deposited, that they should suffer no damage: there they be, and he has the custody of them. Under the law a suc-

a succession in the ministry was kept up, by the entail of an office on a certain tribe and family. But now, under the gospel, when the effusion of the Spirit is more plentiful and powerful, the succession is kept up by the Spirit's operation on men's hearts, qualifying men for and inclining men to that work, some in every age, that the name of Israel may not be blotted out.

4. He accepted Moses as an advocate or intercessor for them, and therefore constituted him their prince and leader, *ver. 10, 11. The Lord hearkened unto me, and said, Arise, go before the people.* It was a mercy to them, that they had such a friend, so faithful both to him that appointed him, and to them for whom he was appointed. It was fit that he who had saved them from ruin, by his intercession in heaven, should have the conduct and command of them. And herein he was a type of Christ, who as he *ever lives making intercession for us, so he has all power both in heaven and earth.*

12. ¶ And now Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul. 13. To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes which I command thee this day for thy good? 14. Behold, the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, is the LORD's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. 15. Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, *even you above all people, as it is this day.* 16. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked. 17. For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward. 18. He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. 19. Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. 20. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God: him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name. 21. He is thy praise, and he is thy God that hath done for thee these great and terrible things which thine eyes have seen. 22. Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.

Here is a most pathetic exhortation to obedience, inferred from the premises, and urged with very powerful arguments, and a great deal of persuasive rhetoric. He brings it in like an orator, with an appeal to his auditors, *And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee?* *ver. 12.* Ask what he requires; as David, *Psal. cxvi. 12, What shall I render?* When we have received mercy from God, it becomes us to enquire what returns we shall make to him. Consider what he requires, and you will find it is nothing but what is highly just and reasonable in itself, and of unspeakable benefit and advantage to you. Let us see here what he doth require, and what a great deal of reason there is, why we should do what he requires.

1. We are here most plainly directed in our duty, both to God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves. 1. We are here taught our duty to God, both in the dispositions and affections of our souls, and in the actions of our lives; our principles and our practices. (1.) We must fear the Lord our God, *ver. 12.* And again, *ver. 20.* We must adore his majesty, acknowledge his authority, stand in awe of his power, and dread his wrath. This is gospel duty, *Rev. xiv. 6, 7.* (2.) We must love him, be well pleased that he is, desire that he may be ours, and delight in the contemplation of him, and in communion with him. Fear him as a great God, and our Lord, love him as a good God, and our father and benefactor. (3.) We must walk in his way, *i. e.* the ways which he has appointed us to walk in. The whole course of our conversation, must be comfortable to his holy will. (4.) We must serve him, *ver. 20.* Serve him with all our heart and soul, *ver. 12.* devote ourselves to his honour, put ourselves under his government, and lay out ourselves to advance all the interests of his kingdom among men. And we must be hearty and zealous in his service, engage and employ our inward man in his work, and what we do for him, must do it cheerfully and with a good will. (5.) We must keep his commandments and his statutes, *ver. 13.* Having given up ourselves to his service, we must make his revealed will our rule in every thing; perform all he prescribes; forbear all he forbids; firmly believing that all the statutes he commands are for our good. Besides the reward of obedience which will be our unspeakable gain, there is a true honour and pleasure in our obedience. It is really for our present good, to be meek and humble, chaste and sober, just and charitable, patient and contented; these make us easy and safe, and pleasant, and truly great. (6.) We must give honour to God in swearing by his name, *ver. 20.* to give him the honour of his omniscience, his sovereignty, his justice, as well as of his necessary existence. Swear by his name, and not by the name of any creature, or false god, whenever an oath or confirmation is called for. (7.) To him we must cleave, *ver. 20.* Having chosen him for our God, we must faithfully and constantly abide with him, and never forsake him. Cleave to him as one we love and delight in; trust and confide in; and from whom we have great expectations.

(2.) We are here taught our duty to our neighbour, *ver. 19.* Love ye the stranger, and if the stranger, much more our brethren, as ourselves. If the Israelites, that were such a peculiar people, so particularly distinguished from all people, must be kind to strangers, much more must we, that are not inclosed in such a pale; we must have a tender concern for all that share with us in the human nature, and as we have opportunity, that is, according to our necessities and our abilities, we must do good unto all men. Two arguments are here urged to enforce this duty. (2.) God's common providence which extends itself to all nations of men, they being all made of one blood. God loveth the stranger, *ver. 18: i. e.* he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things even to those that are Gentiles, and strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and to Israel's God. He knows those perfectly whom we know nothing of. He gives food and raiment even to those, to whom he has not shewed his words and statutes. God's common gifts to mankind oblige us to honour all men. Or, It notes the particular care providence takes of strangers in distress, which we ought to praise him for, (*Psal. cxlvi. 9. The Lord preserveth strangers*) and to imitate him in, to serve him and concur with him therein, being forward to make ourselves instruments

in his hand of kindness to strangers. (2.) The afflicted condition which the Israelites themselves had been in, when they were strangers in Egypt. They that have themselves been in distress and have found mercy with God, should sympathize most feelingly with those that are in the like distress; and be ready to shew kindness to them. The people of the Jews, notwithstanding these repeated commands given them to be kind to strangers, conceived a rooted antipathy to the Gentiles, whom they looked upon with the utmost disdain, which made them envy them the grace of God, and the gospel of Christ, and that brought a final ruin upon them.

(3.) We are here taught our duty to ourselves, *ver. 16.* Circumcise the foreskin of your hearts, *i. e.* cast away from you all corrupt affections and inclinations, which hinder you from fearing and loving God. Mortify the flesh, with the lusts of it. Away with all filthiness and superfluity of naturalities, which obstruct the free course of the word of God to our hearts. Rest not in the circumcision of the body, which was only the sign, and be circumcised in the heart, which is the thing signified. See *Rom. ii. 29.* The command of Christ goes farther than this, and obligeth us not only to cut off the foreskin of the heart, which may easily be spared, but cut off the right hand, and to pluck out the right eye, that is an offence to us: the more spiritual the dispensation is, the more spiritual we are obliged to be, and go the closer in mortifying sin. And be no more stiff-necked, as they had been hitherto, *chap. ix. 24.* Be not any longer obstinate against divine commands and corrections, but ready to comply with the will of God in both. The circumcision of the heart makes it ready to yield to God, and draw his yoke.

2. We are here most pathetically persuaded to our duty. Let but reason rule us, and religion will.

1. Consider the greatness and glory of God, and therefore fear him, and from that principle serve and obey him. What is it that is thought to make a man great, but great honour, power, and possessions? Think then how great the Lord our God is, and greatly to be feared. (1.) He hath great honour, a name above every name, *ver. 17.* He is God of gods, and Lord of lords. Angels are called gods so are magistrates, and the Gentiles had gods many, and lords many, the creatures of their own fancy, but God is infinitely above all these nominal deities. What an absurdity would it be for them to go worship other gods, when the God to whom they had sworn allegiance, was the God of gods. (2.) He has great power. He is a mighty God and terrible, (*ver. 17.*) which regardeth not persons. He has the power of a conqueror, so he is terrible to those that resist him and rebel against him. He has the power of a judge, and so he is just to all those that appeal to him or appear before him. And it is as much the greatness and honour of a judge to be impartial in his justice, without respect of persons or bribes, as it is to a general to be terrible to the enemy, Our God is both. (3.) He hath great possessions. Heaven and earth is his, *ver. 14.* and all the hosts and stars of both. Therefore he is able to bear us out in his service, and has no need of us, or any thing we have, or can do: we are undone without him; but he is happy without us: which makes the condescensions of his grace in accepting us and our services truly admirable. Heaven and earth are his possession, and yet the Lord's portion is his people.

3. Consider the goodness and grace of God, and therefore love him and from that principle serve and obey him. His goodness is his glory as much as his greatness.

1. He is good to all. Whoever he finds miserable, to them he will be found merciful, *ver. 88.* He executes the judgment of the fatherless and widow. It is his honour to help the helpless, and to succour those that most need relief, and that men are apt to do injury to, or at least to put a slight upon. See *Psal. lxxviii. 4, 5.*—*cxlvi. 7—9.*

2. But truly God is good to Israel, in a special manner, and therefore they are under special obligations to him. He is thy praise, and he is thy God, *ver. 21.* Therefore love him and serve him, because of the relation wherein he stands to thee. He is thy God, a God in covenant with thee, and as such he is thy praise, *i. e.* (1.) He puts honour upon thee; he is the God in whom thou mayest boast all the day long: that thou knowest him, and art known of him. If he be thy God, he is thy glory. (2.) He expects honour from thee. He is thy praise, *i. e.* he is the God whom thou art bound to praise; if he have not praise from thee, when may he expect it? He inhabits the praises of Israel.

Consider, 1. The gracious choice he made of Israel, *ver. 15.* he had a delight in thy fathers, and therefore chose their seed: Not that there was any thing in them to merit his favour, or to recommend them to it, but so it seemed good in his eyes. He would be kind to them though he had no need of them.

2. The great things he had done for Israel, *ver. 21, 22.* He minds them not only of what they had heard with their ears and which their fathers had told them of, but of what they had seen with their eyes, and which they must tell their children of, particularly that within a few generations seventy souls (for there were no more when Jacob went down into Egypt) increased to a great nation, as the stars of heaven for multitude. And the more they were in number, the more praise and service God expected from them; yet it proved as in the old world, that when they began to multiply, they corrupted themselves.

C H A P. XI.

With this chapter Moses concludes his preface to the repetition of the statutes and judgments, which they must observe to do: He repeats the general charge, *ver. 1.* and having in the close of the foregoing chapter begun to mention the great things God had done among them; in this, 1. He instances in several of the great works God had done before their eyes, *ver. 2—7.* 2. He sets before them for the future, life and death, the blessing and the curse, according as they did or did not keep God's commandments. That they should certainly prosper, if they were obedient, should be blessed with plenty of all good things, *ver. 8—15.* and with victory over their enemies, and the enlargements of their coasts thereby, *ver. 22—25.* But their disobedience would undoubtedly be their ruin, *ver. 16, 17.* 3. He directs them what means to use that they might keep in mind the law of God, *ver. 18—21.* And, 4. Concludes all with a solemn putting them to their choice which they would have, the blessing or the curse, *ver. 26—32.*

1. **T**HEREFORE thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, always. 2. And know you this day: for I speak not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the LORD your God, his greatness, his

his mighty hand, and his stretched-out arm, 3. And his miracles, and his acts which he did in the midst of Egypt, unto Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and unto all his land; 4. And what he did unto the army of Egypt, unto their horses, and to their chariots, how he made the water of the Red sea to overflow them as they pursued after you, and how the LORD hath destroyed them unto this day; 5. And what he did unto you in the wilderness, until ye came into this place; 6. And what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben; how the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession in the midst of all Israel. 7. But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the LORD, which he did.

Because God has made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude, so the chapter before concludes, therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, so this begins. Those whom God has built up into families, whose beginning was small, but their latter end greatly increaseth, should use that as an argument with themselves why they should serve God. Thou shalt keep his charge, i. e. the oracles of his word, and ordinances of his worship, with which they were intrusted, and for which they were accountable. It is a phrase often used concerning the office of the priests and Levites, for all Israel was a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. Observe the connection of these two: Thou shalt love the Lord, and keep his charge. Since love will work in obedience, and that only is acceptable obedience which flows from a principle of love, 1 John v. 3.

He goes on to mention divers of the great and terrible works of God which their eyes had seen, ver. 7. This part of his discourse he addresseth to the seniors among them, the elders in age, and probably the elders in office were so, and were now his immediate auditors; there were some among them that could remember their deliverance out of Egypt, all above fifty, and to them he speaks this, not to the children, who knew it by hearsay only, ver. 2. Note, God's mercies to us when we were young, we should remember and retain the impressions of when we are old; what our eyes have seen, especially in our early days, has affected us, and should be improved by us long after. They had seen what terrible judgements God had executed upon the enemies of Israel's peace. 1. Upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians that enslaved them. What a fine country was ruined and laid waste by one plague after another to force Israel's enlargement? ver. 3. What a fine army was entirely drowned in the Red sea, to prevent Israel's being re-enslaved? ver. 4. Thus he did give Egypt for their ransom, Isa. xliii. 3. Rather shall that famous kingdom be destroyed, than that Israel shall not be delivered. 2. Upon Dathan and Abiram that embroiled them. Remember what he did in the wilderness, ver. 5. by how many necessary chastisements (as they are called, ver. 2.) they were kept from ruining themselves. Particularly, when those daring Reubenites defiled the authority of Moses, and headed a dangerous rebellion against God himself, which threatened the ruin of the whole nation, and might have ended in that, if the divine power had not immediately crushed the rebellion, by burying the rebels alive; them, and all that was in their possession, ver. 6. What was done against them, though misinterpreted by the dissatisfied party, Numb. xvi. 41. was really done in mercy to Israel. To be saved from the mischiefs of insurrections at home, is as great a kindness to a people, and as obliging, as protection from the invasion of enemies abroad.

8. Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong and go in and possess the land whither ye go to possess it: 9. And that ye may prolong your days in the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers to give unto them, and to their seed, a land that floweth with milk and honey. 10. ¶ For the land whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: 11. But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: 12. A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year, even unto the end of the year. 13. ¶ And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul: 14. That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. 15. And I will send grass in thy fields, for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full. 16. Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them: 17. And then the LORD's wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you.

Still he harps upon the same string, as loth to conclude till he had gained his point. If thou wilt enter into life, if thou wilt enter into Canaan, a type of that life, and find it a good land: indeed to thee, keep the commandments, keep all the commandments which I command you this day: love God, and serve him with all your heart.

1. Because this was the way to get and keep possession of the promised land. (1.) It was the way to get possession, ver. 8. That ye may be strong for war, and so go on and possess it. So little did they know either of hard-

ship or hazard in the wars of Canaan, that he doth not say they should go in and fight for it; no, they had nothing in effect to do but to go in and possess it. He doth not go about to teach them the art of war, how to draw the bow, and use the sword, and keep ranks, that they might be strong and go in and possess the land; no, but let them keep God's commandments, and their religion while they were true to it, would be their strength, and secure their success. (2.) It was the way to keep possession, ver. 9. That ye may prolong your days in the land that your eye is upon. Sin tends to the shortening of the days of particular persons, and to the shortening of the day of a people's prosperity; but obedience will be a lengthening out of their tranquillity.

2. Because the land of Canaan, into which they were going, had a more sensible dependence upon the blessing of heaven, than the land of Egypt had, ver. 10, 11, 12. Egypt was a country fruitful enough, but it was all flat, and was watered, not as other countries with rain, (it is said of Egypt, Zech. xiv. 18. that it has no rain) but by the overflowing of the river Nile at a certain season of the year; to the improving of which there was necessary a great deal of the art and labour of the husbandman; so that in Egypt a man must bestow much cost and pains upon a field, as upon a garden of herbs. And this made them the more apt to imagine, that the power of their own hands got them this wealth. But the land of Canaan was an uneven country, a land of hills and valleys, which not only gave a more pleasing prospect to the eye, but yielded a great variety of soils for the several purposes of the husbandman. It was a land that had no great rivers in it, except Jordan, but drank water of the rain of heaven. And so, (1.) Saved them a great deal of labour. While the Egyptians were ditching and gutting in the fields, up to the knees in mud, to bring water to their land, which otherwise would soon become like the heath in the wilderness, the Israelites could sit in their houses warm and easy, and leave it to God to water their land; with the former and the latter rain, which is called the river of God, (Psal. lxxv. 9.) perhaps in allusion to, and contempt of, the river of Egypt, which that nation was so proud of. Note, The better God has provided by our outward condition for our ease and convenience, the more we should abound in his service: the less we have to do for our bodies, the more we should do for God and our souls. (2.) So he directed them to look upwards to God, who giveth us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, Acts xiv. 17; and promised to be himself as the dew unto Israel, Hos. xiv. 5. Note, 1. The greatest comfort and sweetness of any mercy is to see it coming from heaven, and the immediate gift of divine providence. 2. The closer dependence we have upon God, the more cheerful we should be in our obedience to him. See how Moses here magnifies the land of Canaan, above all other lands, that the eyes of God were always upon it, i. e. they should be so, to see that nothing was wanting, while they kept close to God and duty; its fruitfulness should not be so much the happy product of its soil, but the immediate fruit of the divine blessing; and it appears to have been so by its present state; for it is said to be at this day, now God is departed from it, as barren a spot of ground as perhaps any under heaven. Call it not Naomi, call it Marah.

3. Because God would certainly bless them with abundance of all good things, if they would love him and serve him, ver. 13, 14, 15. I will give you the rain of your land in due season, so that they should neither want it when the ground called for it, nor have it in excess; but the former rain which fell at seed-time, and the latter rain, which fell before the harvest, Amos iv. 7. This represented all the seasonable blessings God would bestow upon them, especially spiritual comforts which would come as the latter and former rain, Hos. vi. 3. And the earth thus watered produced, (1.) Fruits for the service of man; corn, and wine, and oil, Psal. civ. 13, 14, 15. (2.) Grass for the cattle, that they also might be serviceable to man; that he might eat of them and be full, ver. 15. Godliness hath here the promise of the life that now is; but the favour of God shall put gladness into the heart, more than the increase of corn, and wine, and oil, will.

4. Because their revolt from God to idols would certainly be their ruin, ver. 16, 17. Take heed that your heart be not deceived. All that forsake God to set their affection upon, or pay their devotion to, any creature, will find themselves wretchedly deceived to their own destruction; and this will aggravate it, that it was purely for want of taking heed. A little care would have prevented their being imposed upon by the great deceiver. To awaken them to take heed, Moses here tells them plainly, that if they should turn aside to other gods, 1. They would provoke the wrath of God against them, and who knows the power of that anger? 2. Good things would be turned away from them; the heaven would withhold its rain, and then of course the earth would not yield its fruit. 3. Evil things would come upon them, they would perish quickly from off this good land. And the better the land was the more grievous it would be to perish from it. The goodness of the land would not be their security, when the badness of the inhabitants had made them ripe for ruin.

18. ¶ Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. 19. And ye shall teach them your children: speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. 20. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: 21. That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth. 22. ¶ For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him; 23. Then will the LORD drive out all these nations, from before you; and ye shall possess greater nations, and mightier than yourselves. 24. Every place whereupon the soles of your feet shall tread, shall be yours: from the wilderness, and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea, shall your coast be. 25. There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the LORD your God shall lay the fear of you, and the dread of you, upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you.

Here, 1. He repeats the directions he had given for their guidance and assistance in their obedience, and for the keeping up of religion among them,

ver. 18, 19, 20. which is much to the same purpose with that we had before, chap. vi. 6, &c. Let us all be directed by the three rules here given, (1.) Let our hearts be filled with the word of God. *Lay up these words in your heart and in your soul.* The heart must be the treasury or store-house in which the word of God must be laid up, to be used upon all occasions. We cannot expect good practices in the conversation, unless there be good thoughts, good affections, and good principles in the heart. (2.) Let our eyes be fixed upon the word of God. Bind these words for a sign upon your hand, which is always in view, (*Isa. xlix. 16.*) and as frontlets between your eyes, which you cannot avoid the sight of; let them be as ready and familiar to you, and have your eyes as constantly upon them, as if they were written upon your door-posts, and could not be overlooked either when you go out or when you come in. Thus we must lay God's judgments before us, having a constant regard to them, as the guide of our way, as the rule of our work, *Psal. cxix. 30.* (3.) Let our tongues be employed about the word of God, Let it be the subject of our familiar discourse, wherever we are; especially with our children, who must be taught the service of God, as the one thing needful, much more needful than either the rules of decency, or the calling they must live-by in this world. Great care and pains must be taken to acquaint children betimes, and to affect them with the word of God, and the wonderful things of his law. Nor will any thing contribute more to the prosperity and perpetuity of religion in a nation, than the good education of children: if the seed be holy, it is the substance of a land.

2. He repeats the assurances he had before given them, in God's name, of prosperity and success if they were obedient: 1. They should have a happy settlement, ver. 21. Their days should be multiplied, and when they were fulfilled, the days of their children likewise should be many, as the days of heaven, i. e. Canaan should be sure to them and their heirs for ever, as long as the world stands, if they did not by their own sin throw themselves out of it.

3. It should not be in the power of their enemies to give them any disturbance, or make them upon any account uneasy; if ye will keep God's commandments, and be careful to do your duty, ver. 22. God will not only crown the labours of the husbandmen with plenty of the fruits of the earth; but he will own and succeed the more glorious undertakings of the men of war; victory shall attend your arms: which way soever they turn. God will drive out these nations, and put you in possession of their land, ver. 23, 24. Their territories should be enlarged to the utmost extent of the promise, *Gen. xv. 18.* And all their neighbours should stand in awe of them, ver. 25. Nothing contributes more to the making a nation considerable abroad, valuable to its friends, and formidable to its enemies, than religion reigning in it; for who can be against those that have God for them? and he is certainly for those, that are sincerely for him, *Prov. xiv. 34.*

26. ¶ Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: 27. A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you this day: 28. And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods which ye have not known. 29. And it shall come to pass when the LORD thy God hath brought thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal. 30. Are they not on the other side Jordan by the way where the sun goeth down, in the land of the Canaanites, which dwell in the champaign over against Gilgal, beside the plains of Moreh? 31. For ye shall pass over Jordan to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God giveth you, and ye shall possess it, and dwell therein. 32. And ye shall observe to do all the statutes and judgments which I set before you this day.

Here Moses concludes his general exhortation to obedience; and his management is very affecting, and such as, one would think, should have engaged them for ever to God, and should have left impressions upon them, never to be worn out. 1. He sums up all his arguments for obedience in two words, *the blessing, and the curse*, ver. 26, i. e. the rewards and the punishments, as they stand in the promises and threatenings, which are the great functions of the law, taking hold of hope and fear, those two handles of the soul, by which it is caught, held, and managed. These two, the blessing and the curse, he set before them, that is, 1. He explained them, that they might know them; he instanced in the particulars contained both in the blessing and in the curse, that they might see the more fully how desirable the blessing was, and how dreadful the curse. (2.) He confirmed them, that they might believe them; made it evident to them by the proofs he produced of his own commission, and the blessing was not a fool's paradise, nor the curse a bugbear, but both real declarations of the purpose of God concerning them. (3.) He put them to their choice, which of these they would have. So fairly doth he deal with them, and so far is he from putting out the eyes of these men, as he was charged, *Numb. xvi. 14.* They and we are plainly told on what terms he stands with Almighty God. 1. If we be obedient to his laws, we may be sure of a blessing, ver. 27. But 2. If we be disobedient, we may be sure of a curse, ver. 28. Say ye to the righteous, for God hath said it, and all the world cannot unfay it, that it shall be well with them: But wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with them.

2. He appoints a public and solemn proclamation to be made of the blessing and curse which he had set before them, upon the two mountains of Gerizim and Ebal, ver. 29, 30. We have more particular directions for this solemnity, chap. xxvii. 11. and an account of the performance of it, *Josh. viii. 33, &c.* It was to be done, and was done presently upon their coming into Canaan, that when they first took possession of that land, they might know upon what terms they stood. The place where this was to be done, is particularly described by Moses, though he never saw it, which is one circumstance among many, that evidences his divine instructions. It is said to be near the plain, or oaks, or meadows of Moreh, which was one of the first places that Abraham came to in Canaan; so that in sending them thither to hear the blessing and the curse, God minded them of the promise he made to Abraham in that very place, *Gen. xii. 6, 7.* The mention of this appointment here, serves, (1.) For the encouragement of their faith in the promise of God, that they should be masters of Canaan quickly. Do it, (saith Moses) on the other side Jordan, ver. 30. for you may be confident you shall pass over Jordan, ver. 31. The institution of this service to be done in Canaan, was an assurance to them, that they should be brought into pos-

session of it, and a token, like that which God gave to Moses, *Exod. iii. 21.* Ye shall serve God upon this mountain. And, (2.) It serves for an engagement upon them to be obedient, that they might escape that curse, and obtain that blessing, which, besides what they had already heard, they must shortly be witnesses to the solemn publication of, ver. 32: Ye shall observe to do the statutes and judgments, that ye may not in that solemnity be witnesses against yourselves.

C H A P. XII.

Moses at this chapter comes to the particular statutes which he had to give in charge to Israel, and he begins with those which relate to the worship of God; and particularly those which explain the second commandment, about which God is in a special manner jealous, (1.) They must utterly destroy all relics and remainings of idolatry, ver. 1—3. (2.) They must keep close to the tabernacle, ver. 4, 5. The former precept was intended to prevent all false worship: the latter to preserve the worship God had instituted. By this latter law, 1. They are commanded to bring all their offerings to the altar of God, and all their holy things to the place which he should choose, ver. 6, 7, 11, 12, 14, 18, 26, 27, 28. 2. They are forbidden in general, to do as they now did in the wilderness, ver. 8—11. And as the Canaanites had done, ver. 29—32. And in particular, to eat the hallowed things at their own houses, ver. 13, 17, 18. Or, to forsake the instituted ministry, ver. 19. 3. They are permitted to eat flesh as common food at their own houses, provided they did not eat the blood, ver. 15, 16. And again, ver. 20—26.

1. **THESE** are the statutes and judgments which ye shall observe to do in the land which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth. 2. Ye shall utterly destroy all the places wherein the nation which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains and upon the hills, and under every green tree. 3. And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars; and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place. 4. Ye shall do so unto the LORD your God.

From those great original truths, That there is a God, and that there is but one God, arise those great fundamental laws, that that God is to be worshipped, and he only, and that therefore we are to have no other god before him: that is the first commandment, and the second is a guard upon it, or a hedge about it. To prevent a revolt to false gods we are forbidden to worship the true God in such a way and manner as the false gods were worshipped; and are commanded to observe the instituted ordinances of worship; that we may adhere to the proper object of worship. For this reason, Moses is very large in his exposition of the second commandment. What is contained in this, and the four following chapters, mostly refers to that. These are statutes and judgments which they must observe to do, ver. 1. (1.) In the days of their rest and prosperity, when they should be masters of Canaan. We must not think, that our religion is instituted only to be our work in the years of our servitude, our entertainment in the places of our solitude, and our consolation in affliction only; no, when we come to possess a good land, still we must keep up the worship of God in Canaan, as well in a wilderness, when we are grown up, as well as when we are children; when we are full of business, as well as when we have nothing else to do. (2.) All their days, as long as ye live upon their earth. While we are here in our state of trial, we must continue in our obedience, even to the end, and never leave our duty, now grow weary of well-doing.

Note, 1. They are here charged to abolish and extirpate all those things that the Canaanites had served their idol-gods with, ver. 2, 3. Here is no mention of idol-temples, which countenanceth the opinion some have, that the tabernacle of Moses reared in the wilderness, was the first habitation that ever was made for religious uses: and that from it temples took their rise. But the places that had been used, and were now to be levelled, were enclosures for their worship on mountains and hills, as if the height of the ground would give advantage to the ascent of their devotions: and under green trees, either because pleasant, or because awful: and whatever makes the mind easy and reverent, contracts and composes it, was thought to befriend devotion. The solemn shade and silence of a grove, is still admired by those that are disposed to contemplation. But the advantage these retirements gave to the Gentiles worship of their idols, was, that they concealed those works of darkness which could not bear the light; and therefore they must all be destroyed, with the altars, pillars, and images, that had been used by the natives in the worship of their gods, so as the very names of them might be buried in oblivion: and not only not be remembered with respect, but not remembered at all. They must thus consult, (1.) The reputation of their land: let it never be said of this holy land, that it had been thus polluted, but let all these dunghills be carried away, as things they were ashamed of. (2.) The safety of their religion; let none be left remaining, lest profane, unthinking people, especially in degenerated ages, should make use of them in the service of the God of Israel. Let these pest-houses be demolished, as things they were afraid of. He begins the statutes that relate to divine worship with this, because these must be an abhorrence of that which is evil, before there can be a steady adherence to that which is good, *Rom. xii. 9.* The kingdom of God must be set up both in persons and places upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom; for they cannot stand together, nor can there be any communion between Christ and Belial.

2. They are charged not to translate the rites and usages of idolaters into the worship of God; no, not under colour of beautifying and improving it, ver. 4. Ye shall not do to the LORD your God, i. e. you must not think to do honour to him, by offering sacrifices on mountains and hills, erecting pillars, planting groves, and setting up images; no, you must not indulge a luxurious fancy in your worship, nor think that whatever pleases that will please God: he is above all gods, and will not be worshipped as other gods are.

5. But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes, to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt

thalt come; 6. And thither ye shall bring your burnt-offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hands and your vows, and your free-will offerings, and the firstlings of your herds, and of your flocks. 7. And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that you put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee. 8. Ye shall not do after all *the things* that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes. 9. For ye are not as yet come to the rest, and to the inheritance which the LORD your God giveth you. 10. But *when* ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and *when* he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety: 11. Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there, thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD. 12. And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you. 13. Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt-offering in every place that thou seest. 14. But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt-offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee. 15. Notwithstanding, thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roe-buck, and as of the hart. 16. Only ye shall not eat the blood: ye shall pour it upon the earth as water. 17. ¶ Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy wine, or of thy oil, or the firstlings of thy herds, or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest; nor thy free-will offerings, or heave-offering of thine hand: 18. But thou must eat them before the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose, thou and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite that is within thy gates; and thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto. 19. Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth. 20. ¶ When the LORD thy God shall enlarge thy border as he hath promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat flesh (because thy soul longeth to eat flesh) thou mayest eat flesh whatsoever thy soul lusteth after. 21. If the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to put his name there, be too far from thee; then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the LORD hath given thee, as I have commanded thee, and thou shalt eat in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusteth after. 22. Even as the roe-buck and the hart is eaten, so thou shalt eat them: the unclean and the clean shalt eat of them alike. 23. Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life, and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh. 24. Thou shalt not eat it: thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water. 25. Thou shalt not eat it, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do *that which is* right in the sight of the LORD. 26. ¶ Only the holy things which thou hast, and thy vows, thou shalt take, and go unto the place which the LORD shall choose: 27. And thou shalt offer thy burnt-offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of the LORD thy God: and the blood of thy sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of the LORD thy God, and thou shalt eat the flesh. 28. Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest *that which is* good and right in the sight of the LORD thy God. 29. ¶ When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land: 30. Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee, and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods: even so will I do likewise. 31. Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD which he hateth, have they done unto their

gods: for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. 32. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

There is not any one particular precept (as I remember) in all the law of Moses, so largely pressed, and inculcated, as this, by which they are all tied to bring their sacrifices to that one altar which was set up in the court of the tabernacle, and there to perform all the rituals of their religion; for as to moral services, then, no doubt, as now, men might pray every where, as they did in their synagogues. The command to do this, and the prohibition of the contrary, are here repeated again and again, as we teach children: and yet we are sure, there is in scripture no vain repetition: but all this stress is laid upon it, (1.) Because of the strange proneness there was in the hearts of that people to idolatry and superstition, and the danger of their being seduced by the many temptations which they would be surrounded with. (2.) Because of the great use which the observance of this appointment would be of to them, both to prevent the introducing of corrupt customs into their worship, and to preserve among them unity and brotherly love; that meeting all in one place, they might continue both of one way and of one heart. (3.) Because of the significance of this appointment. They must keep to one place, in token of their belief of those two great truths, which we find together, 1 Tim. ii. 5. That *there is one God*, and *one Mediator between God and man*. It not only served to keep up the notion of the unity of the Godhead, but was an intimation to them (though they could not steadfastly discern it) of the only way of approach to God, and communion with him, in and by the Messiah.

Let us now reduce this long charge to its proper heads.

1. It is here promised, that when they were settled in Canaan, when they had *rest from their enemies and dwelt in safety*, God would choose a certain place, which he would appoint to be the center of their unity, to which they should bring all their offerings, ver. 10, 11. Observe, (1.) If they must be tied to one place, they should not be left in doubt concerning it, but should certainly know what place it was. Had Christ intended under the gospel to make any one place such a seat of power, as Rome pretends to be, we should not have been so much in the dark as we are, not so far to seek about the nomination of the place. (2.) God doth not leave it to them to choose the place, lest the tribes should have quarrelled about it; each striving for their secular advantage to have it among them; but he reserves the choice to himself, as he doth the designation of the Redeemer, and the institution of holy ordinances. (6.) He doth not appoint the place now, as he had appointed mount Gerizim and Ebal, for the pronouncing of the blessings and curses, chap. xi. 29. but reserves the doing of it till hereafter, that thereby they might be made to expect farther directions from heaven, and a divine conduct after Moses should be removed.

The place God would choose, is said to be the place where he would put his name in, i. e. which he would have to be called his, where his honour should dwell, where he would manifest himself to his people, and make himself known, as men do by their names, and where he would receive addresses, by which his name is both praised and called upon. It was to be his habitation; where, as King of Israel, he would keep court, and be found by all those that reverently sought him. The ark was the token of God's presence, and where that was put, there God put his name, and that was his habitation; it contained the tables of the law; for none must expect to receive favours from God's hand, but those that are willing to *receive the law from his mouth*. The place God first chose for the ark to reside in was Shiloh: and after that had sinned away its honour, we find the ark at Kirjath-jearim, and other places; but at length, in David's time, it was fixed at Jerusalem, and God said concerning Solomon's temple, more expressly than ever he had said concerning any other place, *This I have chosen for a house of sacrifice*, 2 Chron. vii. 12. Compare chap. vi. 5. Now under the gospel, we have no temple that sanctifies the gold, no altar that sanctifies the gift, but Christ only: and as to the places of worship, the prophets foretold, that *in every place* the spiritual incense should be offered, Mal. i. 11. And our Saviour hath declared, that those are accepted as true worshippers, that worship God in sincerity and truth, without regard either to this mountain or Jerusalem, John iv. 21.

2. They are commanded to bring all their burnt-offerings and sacrifices to this place that God would choose, ver. 6. And again, ver. 11. *Thither shall ye bring all that I command you*. And ver. 14. *There thou shalt offer thy burnt-offerings*. And ver. 27. *The flesh and the blood must be offered upon the altar of the Lord thy God*. And of their peace-offerings, here called their sacrifices, though they were to eat the flesh, yet the blood was to be poured out upon the altar. By this they were taught, the sacrifices and offerings God did not desire, nor accept for their own sake, nor for any intrinsic worth in them, as natural expressions of homage and adoration: but they received their virtue purely from the altar on which they were offered, as it typified Christ; whereas prayers and praises, as much more necessary and valuable, were to be offered every day by the people of God wherever they were. A devout Israelite, might honour God, and keep up communion with him, and obtain mercy from him, though he had not an opportunity, perhaps, for many months together, of bringing a sacrifice to his altar. But this signified the obligation we Christians are under to offer up all our spiritual sacrifices to God in the name of Jesus Christ, hoping for acceptance only upon the score of his mediation, 1 Pet. ii. 5.

3. They are commanded to feast upon their hallowed things, before the Lord with holy joy. They must not only bring to the altar the sacrifices that were to be offered to God, but they must bring to the place of the altar all those things which they were appointed by the law to eat and drink, to the honour of God, in token of their communion with him, ver. 6. Their *tithes, heave-offerings of their hand*, i. e. their first-fruits, their vows, and *free-will offerings*, and firstlings, all those things which were to be religiously made use of, either by themselves, or by the priests and Levites, must be brought to the place which God would choose; as the revenues of the crown, from all parts of the kingdom, are brought into the exchequer. And ver. 7. *There ye shall eat before the Lord, and rejoice in all that you put your hands unto*. And again, ver. 12. *Ye shall rejoice before the Lord, ye and your sons and your daughters*. Observe here, 1. That what we do in the service of God and to his glory, redounds to our benefit, if it be not our own fault. They that sacrifice to God, are welcome to eat before him, and to feast upon their sacrifices: he *jups with us*, and *we with him*, Rev. iii. 20. If we glorify God, we edify ourselves, cultivate our own minds, through the grace of God, by the increase of our knowledge and faith, and enlivening of devout affections, and the confirming of gracious habits and resolutions: thus is the soul nourished. 2. That work for God should be done with holy joy and cheerfulness. Ye shall *eat and rejoice*, ver. 7. and again, ver. 12. and ver. 18. (1.) Now while they were before the Lord they must rejoice, ver. 12. It is the will of God that we should serve him with gladness, and none displeased more than they that covered his altar with

tears, Mal. ii. 13. See what a good-master we serve, that has made it our duty to sing at our work. Even the children and servants must rejoice with them before God, that the services of religion might be a pleasure to them, and not a task or drudgery. 2. They must carry away with them the grateful relish of that delight they found in communion with God, that must rejoice in all that they put their hands unto, ver. 7. Some of the comfort they had had in the business of religion, they must take with them into their common employments, and being thus strengthened in soul, whatever they did, they must do it heartily and cheerfully. And this only pious joy in God and his goodness, and which we are to rejoice evermore, would be the best preservative against the sin and snare of ruin and carnal mirth, and a relief against the sorrows of the world.

4. They are commanded to be kind to the Levites. Did they feast with joy? The Levites must feast with them, and rejoice with them, ver. 12. And again, ver. 18. And a general caution, ver. 19. Take heed, that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest. There were Levites that attended the altar as assistants to the priests, and these must not be forsaken; that is, the service they performed must be constantly adhered to; no other altars must be set up, but that which God appointed; for that would be to forsake the Levites. But this here seems to be spoken of the Levites that were dispersed in the country to instruct the people to the law of God, and to assist them in their devotions; for it is the Levites within their gates, that they are here commanded to make much of. It is a great mercy to have Levites near us, within our gates, that we may ask the law at their mouth, and at our feast to be a check upon us, to restrain excesses. And it is the duty of people to be kind to their ministers that give them good instructions, and set them good examples. As long as we live we shall need their assistance, till we come to that world where ordinances will be superseded, and therefore as long as we live, we must not forsake the Levites. The reason given, ver. 12, is, because the Levite has no part nor inheritance with you; so that he cannot grow rich by husbandry or trade; Let him therefore share with you in the comfort of your riches. They must give the Levites their tithes and offerings, settled on them by the law, because they had no other maintenance.

5. They are allowed to eat common flesh, but not the flesh of their offerings, in their own houses wherever they dwell. What was any way devoted to God, they must not eat at home, ver. 13—17. But what was not so devoted, they might kill, and eat of at their pleasure, ver. 15. And this permission is again repeated, ver. 20, 21, 22. It should seem, that while they were in the wilderness, they did not eat the flesh of any of those kind of beasts that were used in sacrifice, but what was killed at the door of the tabernacle, and part of it presented to God as a peace-offering, Lev. xvii. 3, 4. But when they came to Canaan, where they must live at a great distance from the tabernacle, they might kill what they pleased for their own use, of their flocks and herds, without bringing part to the altar. This allowance is very express, and repeated, lest Satan should take occasion, from that law which forbade the eating of their sacrifices at their own houses, to suggest to them, as he did to our first parents, hard thoughts of God, as if he grudged them the enjoyment of what he had given them; Thou mayest eat whatsoever thy soul lusteth after. There is a natural regular appetite, which it is lawful to gratify with temperance and sobriety, not taking too great a pleasure in the gratification, nor being uneasy, if it be crossed. The unclean, which might not eat of the holy things, yet might eat of the same sort of flesh when it was only used as common food. The distinction between clean persons and unclean was sacred, and designed for the preserving of the honour of their holy feasts, and therefore must not be brought into their ordinarily meals.

This permission hath a double restriction.

1. They must eat according to the blessing which God had given them, ver. 15. Note, It is not only our wisdom, but our duty, to live according to our estates, and not to spend above what we have. And it is unjust on the one hand to hoard what should be laid out; so it is much more unjust to lay out more than we have; for what is not our own must needs be another's who is thereby robbed and defrauded. And this, I say, is much more unjust, because it is easier afterwards to distribute what has been unduly spared, and so to make a sort of restitution for the wrong, than it is to repay to wife, and children, and creditors, what has been unduly spent. Between these two extremes let wisdom find the mean, and then let watchfulness and resolution keep it.

2. They must not eat blood, ver. 16. and again, ver. 23. Only be sure that thou eat not the blood, ver. 24. Thou shalt not eat it, ver. 25. Thou shalt not eat it, that it may go well with thee. When they could not bring the blood to the altar to pour it out there before the Lord, as belonging to him, they must pour it out upon the earth, as not belonging to them, because it was the life, and therefore as an acknowledgment belonged to him who gives life, and as an atonement belonged to him to whom life is forfeited. Bishop Patrick thinks one reason why they were forbidden thus strictly the eating of blood, was to prevent the superstitions of the old idolaters about the blood of their sacrifices, which they thought their demons delighted in, and by eating of which they imagined that they had communion with them.

6. They are forbidden to keep up either their own corrupt usages in the wilderness, or the corrupt usages of their predecessors in the land of Canaan.

1. They must not keep up those ill customs which they had got in the wilderness, and which were connived at in consideration of the present unsettledness of their condition, ver. 8, 9. Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day. Never was there a better governor than Moses, and one would think never a better opportunity of keeping up good order and discipline than now among the people of Israel, when they lay so closely encamped under the eye of their governor, and yet it seems there was much amiss, and many irregularities among them. We must never expect to see any society perfectly pure and right, and as it should be, till we come to the heavenly Canaan. They had sacrifices, and religious worship, courts of justice, and civil government, and by the stoning of the man that gathered sticks on the sabbath-day, it appears there was great strictness used in guarding the most weighty matters of the law; but being frequently upon the remove, and always at uncertainty, (1.) They could none of them observe the solemn feasts, and the rights of cleansing, with the exactness that the law required: And, (2.) Those among them that were disposed to do amiss, had opportunity given them to do it unobserved, by the frequent interruptions which their remove gave to the administration of justice. But (saith Moses) when ye come to Canaan, ye shall not do as we do here. Note, When the people of God are in an unsettled condition, that may be tolerated and dispensed with, which would by no means be allowed at another time. Cases of necessity are to be considered while the necessity continues, but that must not be done in Canaan which was indulged in the wilderness. While a house is in the building, a great deal of dirt and rubbish is suffered to lie by it, which must all be taken away when the house is built. Moses was now about to lay down his life and government, and it is a comfort to him to foresee that Israel would be better in the next reign than they had been in his.

2. They must not worship the Lord by any of those rites or ceremonies, which the nations of Canaan had made use of in the service of their gods, ver. 29—32. They must not so much as inquire into the modes and forms of idolatrous worship: What good would it do them to know those depths of Satan? Rev. ii. 24. It is best to be ignorant of that which there is danger of being infected by. They must not introduce the customs of idolaters, (1.) Because it would be absurd to make those their patterns, whom God had made their slaves and captives, cut off and destroyed from before them. The Canaanites had not flourished and prospered so much in the service of their gods, as that the Israelites should be invited to take up their customs. Those are wretchedly besotted indeed, who will walk in the way of sinners, after they have seen their end. (2.) Because some of their customs were most barbarous and inhuman, and such as trampled not only upon the light and law of nature, but upon natural affection itself, as burning their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods, ver. 31. The very mention of which is sufficient to make it odious, and possess us with a horror of it. (3.) Because their idolatrous customs were an abomination to the Lord, and the transferring of them into his worship, would make even that an abomination, and an affront to him by which they should give him honour, and by which they hoped to obtain his favour. The case is bad indeed when the sacrifice itself is become an abomination, Prov. xv. 8: He therefore concludes, ver. 32, with the same caution concerning the worship of God, which he had before given concerning the word of God, (chap. iv. 2.) Ye shall not add thereto any inventions of your own, under pretence of making the ordinance either more significant or more magnificent; nor diminish from it, under pretence of making it more easy and practicable, or of setting aside that which may be spared, but observe to do all that, and that only, which God has commanded. We have then hope in our religious worship to obtain the divine acceptance, when we observe the divine appointment. God will have his own work done in his own way.

CHAP. XIII.

Moses is still upon that necessary subject concerning the peril of idolatry. In the close of the foregoing chapter he had cautioned them against the peril that might arise from their predecessors the Canaanites. In this chapter he cautions them against the rise of idolatry from among themselves, they must take heed lest any should draw them to idolatry, (1.) By the pretence of prophecy, ver. 1—5. (2.) By the pretence of friendship and relation, ver. 6—11. (3.) By the pretence of numbers, ver. 12—18. But in all these cases the temptation must be resolutely resisted, and the tempters punished and cut off.

1. IF there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, 2. And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods (which thou hast not known) and let us serve them; 3. Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. 5. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death (because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in) so shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.

Here is, 1. A very strange supposition, ver. 1, 2. (1.) It is strange that there should arise any among themselves, especially pretending to vision and prophecy, that should move them to go and serve other gods. Was it possible that any who had so much knowledge of the methods of divine revelation, as to be able to personate a prophet, should yet have so little knowledge of the divine nature and will, as to go himself and entice his neighbours after other gods? Could an Israelite ever be guilty of such impiety? Could a man of sense ever be guilty of such absurdity? We see it in our own day, and therefore may think it the less strange; multitudes that profess both learning and religion, yet exciting both themselves and others, not only to worship God by images, but to give divine honour to saints and angels, which is no better than going after other gods to serve them; such is the power of strong delusions. (2.) It is yet more strange that the sign or wonder given for the confirmation of this false doctrine should come to pass. Can it be thought that God himself should give any countenance to such a vile motion? Did ever a false prophet work a true miracle? It is only supposed here for two reasons. (2.) To strengthen the caution here giving against hearkening to such an one. Though it were possible that he should work a true miracle, yet you must not believe him if he tells you you must serve other gods, for the divine law against that is certainly perpetual and unalterable. The supposition is like that, Gal. i. 8. If we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you, which doth not prove it possibly that an angel should preach another gospel, but strongly expresseth the certainty and perpetuity of that which we have received. So here, (2.) It is to fortify them against the danger of impostures, and lying wonders, (2 Thess. ii. 9.) Suppose the credentials he produceth be so artfully counterfeited, that you cannot discern the cheat, nor disprove them, yet if they be intended to draw you to the service of other gods, that alone is sufficient to disprove them; no evidence can be admitted against so clear a truth as that of the Unity of the Godhead, and so plain a law, as that of worshipping the one only living and true God. We cannot suppose that the God of truth should let his seat of miracles to a lie, to so gross a lie as is supposed in that temptation, let us go after other gods. But if it be asked, why this false prophet is permitted to counterfeit this broad seal! it is answered here, ver. 5: The LORD your God proveth you. He suffers you to be set upon by such a temptation, to try your constancy, that both they that are perfect and they that are false and corrupt may be made manifest. It is to prove you, therefore see that you acquit yourselves in the trial, and stand your ground.

2. Here is a very necessary charge given in this case. 1. Not to yield to the temptation, *ver. 3. Thou shalt not hearken to the words of that prophet.* Not only thou shalt not do the thing he tempts thee to, but thou shalt not so much as patiently hear the temptation, but reject it with the utmost disdain and detestation. Such a suggestion as this is not to be so much as parleyed with, but the ear must be stopped against it; *Get thee behind me, Satan:* some temptations are so grossly vile that they will not bear a debate, nor may we so much as give them the hearing. What follows, *ver. 4. Ye shall walk after the Lord,* may be looked upon, 1. As prescribing a preservative from the temptation; keep close to your duty, and you keep out of harm's way. God never leaves us till we leave him. Or, 2. As furnishing us with an answer to the temptation; say, It is written, *Thou shalt walk after the Lord, and cleave unto him,* and therefore what have I to do with idols?

2. Not to spare the tempter, *ver. 5. That prophet shall be put to death,* both to punish him for the attempt he hath made, the seducer must die, though none were seduced by him; a design upon the crown is treason; and to prevent his doing farther mischief. This is called *putting away the evil.* There is no way of removing the guilt but by removing the guilty; if such a criminal be not punished, they that should do it make themselves responsible. And thus the mischief must be put away; the infection must be kept from spreading, by cutting off the gangrened limb, and putting away the mischief-makers. Such dangerous diseases as these must be taken in time.

6. ¶ If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods (which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; 7. *Namely,* of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth); 8. Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shalt thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him. 9. But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. 10. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die: because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. 11. And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you.

Farther provision is made by this branch of the statute, against receiving the infection of idolatry from those that are near and dear to us.

1. It is the policy of the tempter to send his solicitations by the hand of those we love, whom we least suspect of any ill design upon us, and whom we are desirous to please, and apt to conform ourselves to. The enticement here is supposed to come from a brother or a child that are near by nature; from a wife or friend that are near by choice; and are to us as our own souls, *ver. 6. Satan tempted Adam by eve, and Christ by Peter.* We are therefore concerned to stand upon our guard against an ill proposal, when the person that proposeth it can pretend to an interest in us, that we may never sin against God in compliment to the best friend we have in the world. The temptation is supposed to be private, he will entice thee secretly, implying that idolatry is a work of darkness, which dreads the light, and covets to be concealed: and which the sinner promiseth himself, and the tempter promiseth him secrecy and security in. Concerning the false gods proposed to be served, (1.) The tempter suggests that the worshipping of these gods was the common practice of the world; and if they limited their adorations to an invisible deity, they were singular, and like no body, for they were the gods of the people round about them, and indeed of all the nations of the earth, *ver. 7.* This suggestion draws many away from religion and godliness, that it is an unfashionable thing, and they make their court to the world, and the flesh, because these are the gods of the people that are round about them. (2.) Moses suggests, in opposition to this, that it had not been the practice of their ancestors; they are gods which thou hast not known, thou nor thy fathers. Those that are born of godly parents, and have been educated in pious exercises, when they are enticed to a vain, loose, careless way of living, should remember that those are ways which they have not known, they nor their fathers. And will they thus degenerate?

2. It is our duty to prefer God and religion before the best friends we have in the world. 1. We must not, in compliance to our friends, break God's law, *ver. 8. Thou shalt not consent to him, nor go with him to his idolatrous worship,* no not for company, or curiosity, or to gain a better interest in his affections. It is a general rule, *If sinners entice thee, consent thou not,* Prov. i. 16. 2. We must not in compassion to our friends obstruct the course of God's justice. He that offers such a thing, must not only be looked upon as an enemy, or dangerous person whom one would be afraid of, and swear the peace upon, but as a criminal or traitor, whom, in zeal for our sovereign Lord, his crown and dignity, we are bound to inform against, and cannot conceal without incurring the guilt of a great misprision *ver. 9. Thou shalt surely kill him.* By this law the persons enticed were bound to prosecute the seducer, and to give evidence against him before the proper judges, that he might suffer the penalty of the law, and that without delay, which the Jews say is here intended in that phrase, as it is in the Hebrew, *killing thou shalt kill him;* neither the prosecution nor the execution must be deferred, and he that was first in the former must be first in the latter, to shew that he stood to his testimony, *Thy hand shall be first upon him; to mark him out as an anathema,* and then the hands of all the people to put him away as an accursed thing. The death we must die was that which was looked upon among the Jews as the severest of all other. He must be stoned; and his accusation written is, that he has sought to thrust thee away, by a kind of violence, from the Lord thy God, *ver. 10.* Those are certainly our worst enemies that would thrust us from God, our best friend; and whatever draws us to sin separates between us and God, it is a design upon our life, and to be resented accordingly. And, lastly, here is the good effect of this necessary caution, *ver. 11. All Israel shall hear and fear.* They ought to hear and fear; for the punishment of crimes committed is designed in terror, for the prevention of the like. And it is to be hoped they will hear and fear, and by the severity of the punishment, especially when it is at the prosecution of a father, a brother, or a friend, will be made to conceive a horror of the sin, as exceeding sinful; and to be afraid of incurring the like punishments themselves. Smite the scorner

that sins presumptuously, and the simple that is in danger of sinning carelessly will beware.

12. ¶ If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying, 13. *Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods (which ye have not known);* 14. Then shalt thou enquire and make search, and ask diligently; and behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you: 15. Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword. 16. And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit, for the LORD thy God: and it shall be a heap for ever, it shall not be built again. 17. And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and shew thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers; 18. When thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the LORD thy God.

Here the case is put of a city revolting from its allegiance to the God of Israel, and serving other gods.

1. The crime is supposed to be committed, (1.) By one of the cities of Israel, that lay within the jurisdiction of their courts; the church then judged them only that were therein, 1 Cor. v. 12, 13. And even when they were ordered to preserve their religion in the first principles of it, by fire and sword, yet they were not allowed by fire and sword to propagate it. They that are born within the allegiance of a prince, if they take up arms against him are dealt with as traitors, but foreign invaders are not so. The city that is here become idolatrous is supposed formerly to have worshipped the true God, but now to be withdrawn to other gods, which intimates how great the crime is, and how sore the punishment will be of those, that after they have known the way of righteousness turn aside from it, 2 Pet. ii. 21. (2.) It is supposed to be committed by the generality of the inhabitants of the city, for we may think, that if a considerable number did retain their integrity, those only that were guilty were to be destroyed, and the city was to be spared for the sake of the righteous in it, for *shall not the judge of all the earth do right?* No doubt he shall. (3.) They are supposed to be drawn to idolatry by certain men the children of Belial, men that would endure no yoke, so it signifies; that neither fear God nor regard man, but shake off all restraints of law and conscience, and are perfectly lost to all manner of virtue; these are they that say, let us serve other gods, that will not only allow, but will countenance and encourage our immoralities. Belial is put for the devil, 2 Cor. vi. 15. and the children of Belial are his children. These withdraw the inhabitants of the city; for a little of this old leaven when it is entertained, soon leavens the whole lump.

2. The cause is ordered to be tried with a great deal of care, *ver. 14. Thou shalt enquire and make search.* They must not proceed upon common fame, or take the information by hear-say, but must examine the proofs; and not give judgment against them unless the evidence was clear, and the charge fully made out. God himself, before he destroyed Sodom, is said to come down and see whether its crimes were according to the clamour, Gen. xviii. 21. In judicial processes it is requisite that time, and care, and pains, be taken to find out the truth, and that search be made without any passion, prejudice, or partiality. The Jewish writers say, that though particular persons that were idolaters might be judged by the inferior courts, the defection of a city must be tried by the great Sanhedrim; and if it appear that they are thrust away to idolatry, they send two learned men to them to admonish and reduce them. If they repent all is well; if not, then all Israel must go up to war against them, to testify their indignation against idolatry, and to stop the spreading of the contagion.

3. If the crime were proved, and the criminals were incorrigible, the city was to be wholly destroyed. If there were a few righteous men in it, no doubt they would remove themselves and their families out of such a dangerous place, and then all the inhabitants, men, women, and children, must be put to the sword, *ver. 15.* all the spoil of the city, both shop-goods and the furniture of houses, must be brought into the market-place and burned, and the city itself must be laid in ashes and never built again, *ver. 16.* The soldiers are forbidden, upon pain of death, to convert any of the plunder to their own use, *ver. 17.* it was a devoted thing, and dangerous to meddle with it, as we find in the case of Achan. Now, 1. God enjoins this severity to shew what a jealous God he is in the matters of his worship, and how great a crime it is to serve other gods. Let men know that God will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven images. 2. He expects that magistrates having their honour and power from him, should be concerned for his honour, and use their power for terror to evil-doers, else they bear the sword in vain. 3. The faithful worshippers of the true God must take all occasions to shew their just indignation against idolatry, much more against atheism, infidelity, and irreligion. 4. It is here intimated, that the best expedient for turning away of God's anger from a land, is to execute justice upon the wicked of the land, *ver. 17.* that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of his anger, which was ready to break out against the whole nation, for the wickedness of that one apostate city. It is promised that if they would thus root wickedness out of their land, God would multiply them. They might think it impolitic, and against the interest of their nation, to ruin a whole city, for a crime relating purely to religion, and that they should be more sparing of the blood of Israelites: fear not that (saith Moses) God will multiply you the more; the body of your nation will lose nothing by the letting out of this corrupt blood. Lastly, though we do not find this law put in execution in all the history of the Jewish church, (Gibea was destroyed, not for idolatry, but immorality) yet for the neglect of the execution of it upon the inferior cities, that served idols, God himself, by the army of the Chaldeans, put it in execution upon Jerusalem the head city, which, for its apostacy from God, was utterly destroyed and laid waste, and lay in ruins seventy years. Though idolaters may

escape the punishment from men, (nor is this law in the letter of it binding now, under the gospel) yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgments. The New Testament speaks of communion with idolaters, as a sin which above any other provokes the Lord to jealousy, and dares him as if we were stronger than he, 1 Cor. x. 21, 22.

C H A P. XIV.

Moses in this chapter teaches them, (1.) To distinguish themselves from their neighbours by a singularity, (1.) In their mourning, ver. 1, 2. (2.) In their meat, ver. 3—21. (3.) To devote themselves unto God, and in token of that to give him his dues out of their estates, the yearly tithe; and that every third year for the maintenance of their religious feasts, the Levites, and the poor, ver. 22—29.

1. **YE** are the children of the LORD your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead. 2. For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth. 3. ¶ Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing. 4. These are the beasts which ye shall eat: the ox, the sheep, and the goat, 5. The hart and the roe-buck, and the fallow-deer, and the wild goat, and the pygarg, and the wild ox, and the chamois. 6. And every beast that parteth the hoof, and cleaveth the cleft into two claws, and cheweth the cud amongst the beasts, that ye shall eat. 7. Nevertheless these ye shall not eat, of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the cloven hoof: as the camel, and the hare, and the coney: for they chew the cud but divide not the hoof: therefore they are unclean unto you. 8. And the swine, because it divideth the hoof, yet cheweth not the cud, it is unclean unto you: ye shall not eat of their flesh, nor touch their dead carcase. 9. ¶ These ye shall eat of all that are in the waters: all that have fins and scales shall ye eat: 10. And whatsoever hath not fins and scales, ye may not eat: it is unclean unto you. 11. ¶ Of all clean birds ye shall eat. 12. But these are they of which ye shall not eat: the eagle, and the osprey, and the osprey, and the osprey. 13. And the glede, and the kite, and the vulture after his kind, 14. And every raven after his kind, 15. And the owl, and the night-hawk, and the cuckow, and the hawk after his kind, 16. The little owl, and the great owl, and the swan, 17. And the pelican, and the gier-eagle, and the cormorant, 18. And the stork, and the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the bat. 19. And every creeping thing that flieth, is unclean unto you; they shall not be eaten. 20. But of all clean fowls ye may eat. 21. ¶ Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it, or thou mayest sell it unto an alien: for thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

Moses here tells the people of Israel,

1. How God had dignified them as a peculiar people, with three distinguished privileges which were their honour, and figures of those spiritual blessings in heavenly things, with which God has in Christ blessed us. (1.) Here is election; the Lord has chosen thee, ver. 2. Not for their own merit, or for any good works foreseen, but because he would magnify the riches of his power and grace among them. He did not choose them because they were by their own dedication and subjection a peculiar people to him above other nations; but he chose them that they might be so by his grace; and thus were believers chosen, Eph. i. 4. (2.) Here is adoption, ver. 1. Ye are the children of the Lord your God, formed by him into a people, owned by him as his people; nay, his family, a people near unto him, nearer than any other. *Israel is my son, my first born*; not because he needed children, but because they were orphans and needed a father. Every Israelite indeed is a child of God, partaker of his nature and favour, his love and blessing: behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us! (3.) Here is sanctification, ver. 2. Thou art a holy people: separated and set apart for God, devoted to his service, designed for his praise, governed by a holy law, graced by a holy tabernacle, and the holy ordinances relating to it. God's people are obliged to be holy, and if they be holy, are obliged to the grace of God that makes them so. The Lord has set them apart for himself, and qualified them for his service, and the enjoyment of him, and so has made them holy to himself.

2. How they ought to distinguish themselves, by a sober singularity from all the nations that were about them. And God having thus advanced them, let not them debase themselves by admitting the superstitious customs of idolaters, and by making themselves like them, put themselves upon the level with them. Be ye children of the Lord your God; so the Seventy read it, as a command, i. e. carry yourselves as becomes the children of God, and do nothing to disgrace the honour, and forfeit the privileges of the relation.

In two things particularly they must distinguish themselves;

1. In their mourning, ye shall not cut yourselves, ver. 1. That forbids (as some think) not only their cutting themselves at their funerals, either to express their grief, or with their own blood to appease the infernal deities, but their wounding and mangling themselves in the worship of their gods, as Baal's prophets did, 1 Kings xviii. 28. or their marking themselves by incisions in the flesh, for such and such deities, which in them above any would be an inexcusable crime, who in the sign of circumcision bore about with them in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jehovah. So that,

1. They are forbidden to deform or hurt their own bodies upon any ac-

count. Methinks this is like a parent's charge to his little children, that are foolish, careless, and wilful, and are apt to play with knives, *Children, ye shall not cut yourselves*. This is the intention of those commands which oblige us to deny ourselves; the true meaning of them, if we understand them right, would appear to be, *do yourselves no harm*; and this also is the design of those providences which must cross us, to remove from us those things by which we are in danger of doing ourselves harm. Knives are taken from us lest we cut ourselves. They that are dedicated to God, as a holy people, must do nothing to disfigure themselves; the body is for the Lord, and is to be used accordingly.

2. They are forbidden to disturb and afflict their own minds with inordinate grief for the loss of near and dear relations. Ye shall not express or exasperate your sorrow, even upon the most mournful occasion, by cutting yourselves, and making baldness between your eyes, like men enraged or resolutely hardened in sorrow for the dead, as those that have no hope, 1 Thess. iv. 13. It is an excellent passage which Mr. Ainsworth here quotes from one of the Jewish writers, who understands this as a law against immoderate grief for the death of our relations. *If your father* (for instance) *die, you shall not cut yourselves*, that is, *you shall not sorrow more than is meet for you are not fatherless, you have a father, who is great, living, and permanent, even the holy, blessed God, whose children ye are, ver. 1. But an infidel* (saith he) *when his father dies, hath no father that can help him in time of need; for he hath said to a stock, Thou art my father, and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth, (Jer. ii. 27.) therefore he weeps, cuts himself, and makes him bald*. We that have a God to hope in, and a heaven to hope for, must bear up ourselves with that hope under every burden of this kind.

2. They must be singular in their meat. Many sorts of flesh, which were wholesome enough, and which other people did commonly eat, they must religiously abstain from, as unclean. This law we had before, Lev. xi. 2. where it was largely opened. It seems plainly, by the coherence here, to be intended as a mark of peculiarity; for their observance of it would make them to be taken notice of in all mixed companies as a separate people, and preserve them from mingling themselves with, and conforming themselves to, their idolatrous neighbours.

1. Concerning beasts, here is a more particular enumeration of those which they were allowed to eat, than was in Leviticus, to shew that they had no reason to complain of their being restrained from eating swine's flesh and hares, and rabbits (which were all that were then forbidden, but are now commonly used) when they were allowed so great a variety, not only of that which we call butchers meat, ver. 3. which alone was offered in sacrifice, but of venison, which they had great plenty of in Canaan, the hart, and the roe-buck, and the fallow-deer, ver. 5. which, though never brought to God's altar, was allowed them at their own tables. See chap. xii. 22. When of all these (as Adam of every tree of the garden) they might freely eat, those were inexcusable, who to gratify a perverse appetite, or, (as should seem) in honour of their idols, and in participation of their idolatrous sacrifices, eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things (made so by this law) was in their vessels, Isa. xlv. 4.

2. Concerning fish, there is only one general rule given, that whatsoever had not fins and scales (as shell-fish and eels, besides leeches and other animals in the water that are not proper food) was unclean and forbidden, ver. 9, 10.

3. No general rule is given concerning fowl, but those particularly mentioned that were to be unclean to them, and there are few or none of them which are here forbidden, that are now commonly eaten; and whatsoever is not expressly forbidden, is allowed, ver. 11, 20. Of all clean fowls ye may eat.

They are farther forbidden, (1.) To eat the flesh of any creature that died of itself, because the blood was not separated from it; and besides the ceremonial uncleanness it lay under, from Lev. xi. 39. it is not wholesome food, nor ordinarily used among us, except by the poor. (2.) To seethe a kid in its mother's milk, either to gratify their own luxury, supposing it a dainty bit, or in conformity to some superstitious custom of the heathen. The Chaldee paraphrast reads it, *Thou shalt not eat flesh-meats and milk-meats together*. And so it would forbid the use of butter, as sauce to any flesh. Now as to all these precepts concerning their food, (1.) It is plain in the law itself, that they belonged only to the Jews, and were not moral, nor of perpetual use, because not of universal obligation; for what they might not eat themselves, they might give to a stranger, a proselyte of the gate, that had renounced idolatry, and therefore was permitted to live among them, though not circumcised; or, they might sell to an alien, a mere Gentile, that came into their country for trade, but might not settle in it, ver. 21. They might feed upon that which an Israelite might not touch; which is a plain instance of their peculiarity; and their being a holy people. It is plain in the gospel, that they are now antiquated and repealed: for every creature of God is good, and nothing now to be refused, or called common and unclean, 1 Tim. iv. 4.

22. Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. 23. And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name, and the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds, and of thy flocks: that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always. 24. And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it, or if the place be too far from thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God hath blessed thee: 25. Then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose. 26. And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou and thine household, 27. And the Levite that is within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him: for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee. 28. ¶ At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates. 29. And the Levite (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy

thy gates shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.

We have here a part of the statute concerning tithes: The products of their ground were twice tithed, so that putting both together, a fifth part was devoted to God out of their increase, and only four parts of five were for their own common use: and they could not but own they sat upon an easy rent, especially since God's part was disposed of to their own benefit and advantage. The first tithe was for the maintenance of their Levites, who taught them the good knowledge of God, and ministered to them in holy things: this is supposed as anciently due, and is entailed upon the Levites as an inheritance, by that law, *Numb. xviii. 24, &c.* But it is the second tithe that is here spoken of, which was to be taken out of the remainder, when the Levites had had theirs.

1. They are here charged to separate it, and set it apart for God, *ver. 22.* *Thou shalt surely tithe all the increase of thy seed.* The Levites took care of their own, but the separating of this was left to the owners themselves: the law encouraging them to be honest, by reposing a confidence in them, and so trying their fear of God. They are bid to tithe truly, *i. e.* to be sure to do it, and to do it faithfully, and carefully, that God's part might not be diminished, either with design or by oversight. Note, We must be sure to give God his full dues out of our estates, for being but stewards of them it is required that we be faithful, as those that must give account.

2. They are here directed how to dispose of it, when they had separated it. Let every man lay by as God prospers him and gives him success, and then let him lay out in pious uses as God gives him opportunity; and it will be the easier to lay out, and the proportion more satisfying, when first we have laid by. This second tithe may be disposed of 1. In works of piety, for the two first years after the year of release. They must bring it up, either in kind, or the full value of it, to the place of the sanctuary, and there must spend it in holy feasting before the Lord. If they could do it with any convenience, they must bring it in kind, *ver. 23.* But if not they might turn it into money, *ver. 24, 25.* And that money must be laid out in something to feast upon before the Lord. The comfortable cheerful using of what God hath given us with temperance and sobriety, is really the honouring of God with it. Contentment, holy joy, and thankfulness, make every meal a religious feast. The end of this law we have, *ver. 23.* *That thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always:* it was to keep them right and firm to their religion, (1.) By acquainting them with the sanctuary, the holy things, and the solemn services that were there performed; what they read the appointment of in their bibles, it would do them good to see the observance of in the tabernacle; it would make a deeper impression upon them, which would keep them out of the snares of the idolatrous customs. Note, It will have a good influence upon our constancy in religion, *never to forsake the assembling of ourselves together,* Heb. x. 25. By the comfort of the communion of saints, we may be kept to our communion with God. (2.) By using them to the most pleasant and delightful services of religion. Let them rejoice before the Lord, that they may learn to fear him always. The more pleasure we find in the ways of religion, the more likely we shall be to persevere in those ways. One thing they must remember in their pious entertainments, to bid their Levites welcome to them. Thou shalt not forsake the Levite, *ver. 27.* Let him never be a stranger to thy table, especially when thou eatest before the Lord.

2. Every third year this tithe must be disposed of at home in works of charity, *ver. 23, 29.* *Lay it up within thy own gates,* and let it be given to the poor: who knowing the provision this law had made for them, no doubt would come to seek it; and that they might make the poor familiar to them, and not disdain their company, they are here directed to welcome them to their houses; thither let them come, and eat and be satisfied. In this charitable distribution of the second tithe, they must have an eye to the poor ministers, and add to their encouragement by entertaining them; next to poor strangers not only for the supply of their necessities, but to put a respect upon them, and so to invite them to turn proselytes; and next to the fatherless and widow, who though perhaps they may have a competent maintenance left them, yet cannot be supposed to live so plentifully and comfortably as they had done in months past, and therefore countenance them, and help to make them easy by inviting them to this entertainment. God has a particular care to widows and fatherless, and he requires that we should have so too. It is his honour and will be ours to help the helpless. And if we thus serve God, and do good with what we have, it is promised here, that the Lord our God will bless us in all the work of our hand. Note, 1. The blessing of God is all in all to our outward prosperity, and without that blessing the works of our hand which we do will bring nothing to pass. 2. The way to obtain that blessing is to be diligent and charitable. The blessing descends upon the working hand; expect not that God should bless thee in thy idleness, and love of ease, but in all the works of thy hand: It is the hand of the diligent with the blessing of God upon it, that makes rich, *Prov. x. 4—22.* And it descends upon the giving hand; he that thus scatters certainly increases; and the liberal soul will be made fat. It is an undoubted truth, though little believed, that to be charitable to the poor, and to be free and generous in the support of religion, and any good work, is the surest and safest way of thriving. *What is lent to the Lord, will be repaid with abundant interest,* Ezek. xlv. 30.

C H A P. XV.

In this chapter Moses gives orders, (1.) Concerning the release of debts every seventh year, *ver. 1—6.* with a caution that that be no hindrance to charitable lending, *ver. 7—11.* 2. Concerning the release of servants after seven years service, *ver. 12—18.* (3.) Concerning the justification of the firstlings of cattle to God, *ver. 19—23.*

1. **A**T the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. 2. And this is the manner of the release: every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour, shall release it, he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother, because it is called the LORD's release. 3. Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it again: but that which is thine with thy brother, thine hand shall release. 4. Save when there shall be no poor among you: for the LORD shall greatly bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it: 5. Only if thou carefully hearken

unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command thee this day. 6. For the LORD thy God blest thee, as he promised thee, and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee. 7. ¶ If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: 8. But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. 9. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release is at hand: and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought, and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee. 10. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. 11. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore, I command thee, saying, thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in thy land.

Here is, (1.) A law for the relief of poor debtors, such (we may suppose) as were insolvent. Every seventh year was a year of release, in which the ground rested from being tilled, servants were discharged from their services, and among other acts of grace, this was one, that they that had borrowed money, and had not been able to pay it before, should this year be released from it; and though if they were able, they were afterwards bound in conscience to repay it, yet from thenceforth the creditor should never recover it by law. Many good expositors think it only forbids the exacting of the debt in the year of release, because no harvest being gathered in that year, it could not be expected that men should pay their debts then, but that afterwards it might be sued for and recovered: so that the release did not extinguish the debt, but only stay the process for a time. But others think it was a release of the debt for ever: and that seems more probable; yet under certain limitations expressed or implied. It is supposed that the debtor was an Israelite, *ver. 3.* an alien could not take the benefit of this law: and that he was poor, *ver. 4.* that he did not borrow for trade or purchase; but for the subsistence of his family; and that now he could not pay it without reducing himself to poverty, and coming under a necessity of seeking relief in other countries, which might be his temptation to revolt from God. The law is not that the creditor shall not receive the debt, if the debtor, or his friends for him can pay it; but he shall not exact it by a legal process. The reasons of this law are (1.) To put an honour on the sabbatical year, because it is called the LORD's release, *ver. 2.* That was God's year for their land, as the weekly sabbath was God's day for themselves, their servants and cattle, and as by the resting of their ground, so by the release of their debts, God would teach them to depend upon his providence. This year of release typified the grace of the gospel, in which is proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord, and by which we obtain the release of our debts, that is, the pardon of our sins, and we are taught to forgive injuries, as we are and hope to be forgiven of God. (2.) It was to prevent the falling of any Israelite into extreme poverty: so the margin reads, *ver. 4.* *To the end there shall be no poor among you,* none miserably and scandalously poor, to the reproach of their nation and religion; the reputation of which they ought to preserve. (3.) God's security is here given by a divine promise, that whatever they lost by their poor debtors, it should be made up to them in the blessing of God upon all they had and did, *ver. 4, 5, 6.* Let them take care to do their duty, and then God would bless them with such great increase, that what they might lose by bad debts, if they generously remitted them, should not be missed out of their stock at the year's end. Not only the Lord shall bless thee, *ver. 4.* but he doth bless thee, *ver. 6.* It is altogether inexcusable, if God has given us abundance, so that we have not only enough, but to spare, and yet we are rigorous and severe in our demands from our poor brethren; for our abundance should be the supply of their wants, that at least there may not be such an inequality as is between two extremes, *2 Cor. viii. 14.* They must also consider that their land was God's gift to them, and all their increase was the fruit of God's blessing upon them, and therefore they were bound in duty to him to use and dispose of their estates as he should order and direct them. And (lastly) if they would remit what little sums they had lent to their poor brethren, it is promised that they should be able to lend great sums to their rich neighbours, *even to many nations,* *ver. 6.* and should be enriched by those loans. Thus the nations should become subject to them, and dependent on them, as the borrower is servant to the lender, *Prov. xxii. 7.* To be able to lend, and not to have need to borrow, we must look upon as a great mercy, and a good reason why we should do good with what we have, lest we provoke God to turn the scales.

2. Here is a law in favour of poor borrowers, that they might not suffer damage by the former law. Men would be apt to argue, *If the case of a man be so with his debtor, that if the debt be not paid before the year of release it shall be lost, it were better not to lend:* No, saith this branch of the statute, thou shalt not think such a thought. 1. It is taken for granted that there should be poor among them, who would have occasion to borrow, *ver. 7.* and there would never want some such objects of charity, *ver. 11.* *The poor shall never cease out of thy land;* though not such as were reduced to extreme poverty, yet such as would be behind-hand, and would have occasion to borrow; of such poor he here speaks, and such we have always with us; so that a charitable disposition may soon find a charitable occasion. 2. In such a case we are here commanded to lend or give, according as our ability and necessity of the case is. Thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand; *ver. 7.* If the hand be shut, it is a sign the heart be hardened; for if the clouds were full of rain, they would empty themselves, *Eccles. xi. 3.* Bowels of compassion would produce liberal distribution, *1 Sam. ii. 16.* Thou shalt not only stretch out thy hand to him to reach him something, but thou shalt open thy hand wide unto him, to lend him sufficient, *ver. 8.* Sometimes there is as much charity in prudent lending as in giving, as it obliges the borrower to industry and honesty, and may put him into a way of helping himself. We are sometimes tempted to think, what an object of charity presents itself, we may choose whether we will give any thing or nothing; little or much; whereas it is here an express precept, *ver. 11.* *I command*

command thee, not only to give, but to open thy hand wide; to give liberally. 3. Here is a caveat against that objection which might arise against charitable lending, from the foregoing law for the release of debts, *ver. 9.* Beware that there be not a thought, a covetous ill-natured thought, in thy Belial heart, the year of release is at hand, and therefore I will not lend what I must then be sure to lose, lest thy poor brother, whom thou refusedst to lend to, complain to God, and it will be a sin, a great sin, to thee. Note, (1.) The law is spiritual, and lays a restraint upon the thoughts of the heart. We mistake, if we think thoughts are free from the divine cognizance and check. (2.) That is a wicked heart indeed, that raiseth evil thoughts from the good law of God, as theirs did, who, because God had obliged them to the charity of forgiving, denied the charity of giving. (3.) We must carefully watch against all those secret suggestions which would divert us from our duty, or discourage us in it. Those that would keep from the act of sin, must keep out of their minds the very thought of sin. (4.) When we have an occasion of charitable lending, if we cannot trust the borrower, we must trust God, and lend, hoping for nothing again in this world, but expecting it will be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, *Luke vi. 35—xiv. 14.* (5.) It is a dreadful thing to have the cry of the poor against us, for God has his ear open to that cry, and in compassion to them will be sure to reckon with those that deal hardly with them. (6.) That which we think is our prudence, often proves sin to us; he that refused to lend, because the year of release was at hand, thought he did wisely, and that men would praise him as doing well for himself, *Psalm xlix. 18.* But he is here told that he did wickedly, and God would condemn him as doing ill to his brother, and we are sure that is the judgment of God according to truth; and that which he saith is sin to us, will certainly be ruin to us, if it be not repented of. 4. Here is a command to give cheerfully, whatever we give in charity, *ver. 10.* Thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest. Be not loth to part with thy money on so good an account, nor think it lost: grudge not a kindness to thy brother; and distrust not the providence of God, as if thou shouldst want that thyself which thou givest in charity; but, on the contrary, let it be a pleasure and a satisfaction of soul to thee to think that thou art honouring God with thy substance, doing good, making thy brother easy, and laying up for thyself a good security for the time to come. What thou doest, do freely, for God loves a cheerful giver, *2 Cor. ix. 7.* 5. Here is a promise of a recompence in this life, for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee. Covetous people say, giving undoes us; no, giving cheerfully in charity will enrich us, it will fill the barns with plenty, *Prov. iii. 10.* and the soul with true comfort, *Isa. lviii. 10, 11.*

12. ¶ And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years, then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. 13. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: 14. Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy wine-press: of that wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee, thou shalt give unto him. 15. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to day. 16. And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee (because he loveth thee, and thine house, because he is well with thee); 17. Then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever: and also unto thy maid-servant thou shalt do likewise. 18. It shall not seem hard unto thee when thou sendest him away free from thee: for he hath been worth a double hired servant to thee; in serving thee six years: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all that thou doest.

Here is, (1.) A repetition of the law that had been given concerning Hebrew servants, which either had sold themselves for servants, or were sold by their parents through extreme poverty, or were sold by the court of judgment for some crime committed. The law was, (1.) That they should serve but six years, and in the seventh should go out free, *ver. 12.* compare *Exod. xxi. 2.* And if the year of jubilee happened before he served out his time, that would be his discharge. God's Israel were a free people, and must not be compelled to perpetual slavery; thus are God's spiritual Israel called unto liberty. (2.) That if, when their six years were expired, they had no mind to go out free, but would rather continue in service, as taking less care, though more pains, than their masters, in that case they must lay themselves under an obligation to serve for ever, that is, for life, by having their ears bored to the door-posts, *ver. 16, 17.* compare *Exod. xxi. 6.* If hereby a man disgraced himself, with some, as of a mean and servile spirit, they had not a due sense of the honour and pleasure of liberty; yet we may suppose, with others, he got reputation, as of a quiet contented spirit, humble, and diligent, and loving, and not given to change.

2. Here is an addition to this law, requiring them to put some small stock into their servants' hands to set up with for themselves, when they sent them out of their service, *ver. 13, 14.* It was to be supposed they had nothing of their own, and that their friends had little or nothing for them, else they would have been redeemed before they were discharged by law; they had no wages for their service, and all they got by their labour was their master's, so that their liberty would do them little good, having nothing to begin the world upon, therefore they are here commanded to furnish them liberally with corn and cattle; no certain measure is prescribed, that is left to the master's generosity, who probably would have respect to the servants' merit and necessity; but the Jewish writers say, he could not give less than the value of thirty shekels of silver, but as much more as he pleased. The maid-servants, though they were not to have their ears bored if they were minded to stay, yet if they went out free, they were to have a gratuity given them, for to that those words refer, *ver. 17.* Unto thy maid-servant thou shalt do likewise.

The reasons for this are taken from the law of gratitude. They must do it, 1. In gratitude to God, who had not only brought them out of Egypt, (*ver. 15.*) but brought them out greatly enriched with the spoils of the Egyptians. Let not them send their servants out empty, for they were not sent empty out of the house of bondage. God's tender care of us, and kindness to us, obliges us to be careful of, and kind to those that have a dependence on us. Thus we must render according to the benefit done unto us. 2. In gratitude to their servants, *ver. 18.* Grudge not to give him a little

out of thine abundance, for he hath been worth a double hired servant to thee. The days of the hireling at most were but three years, *Isa. xvi. 14.* but he hath served thee six years, and without any wages as the hired servant hath. Masters and landlords ought to consider what need they have of, and what ease and advantage they have by, their servants and tenants, and should not only be just but kind to them. To these reasons it is added, as before in this chapter, *ver. 4, 6, 10.* The Lord thy God shall bless thee. Then we may expect family blessings, the springs of family prosperity, when we make conscience of our duty to our family relations.

19. ¶ All the firstling males that come of thy herd, and of thy flock, thou shalt sanctify unto the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work with the firstling of thy bullock, nor shear the firstling of thy sheep. 20. Thou shalt eat it before the LORD thy God year by year in the place which the LORD shall choose, thou and thy household. 21. And if there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame, or blind, or have any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the LORD thy God. 22. Thou shalt eat it within thy gates: the unclean and the clean person shall eat it alike, as the roe-buck, and as the hart. 23. Only thou shalt not eat the blood thereof: thou shalt pour it upon the ground as water.

Here is, 1. A repetition of the law concerning the firstlings of their cattle, that if they were males they were to be sanctified to the Lord, *ver. 19.* in remembrance of, and in thankfulness for, the sparing of the first-born of Israel, when the first-born of the Egyptians both of man and beast, were slain by the destroying angel, *Exod. xiii. 1—15.* on the eighth day it was given to God, *Exod. xxii. 30.* and to be divided between the priest and the altar, *Numb. xviii. 17, 18.*

2. An addition to that law, for the farther explication of it, directing them what to do with the firstlings. (1.) That were females. Thou shalt do no work with the female firstlings of the cow, nor shear those of the sheep, *ver. 19.* of them the learned Bishop Patrick understands it. Though the female firstlings were not so entirely sanctified to the God as males, nor so early as at eight days old, yet they were not to be converted by the owners to their own use as their other cattle, but must be offered to God as a peace-offering or used in a religious feast, at the year's end, *ver. 20.* Thou shalt eat it before the Lord thy God, as directed, *chap. xii. 17.*

(2.) But what must they do with those that were blemished, ill-blemished? *ver. 21.* Were it male or female, it must not be brought near the sanctuary, nor used either for sacrifice or holy feasting, for it would not be fit to honour God with, nor to typify Christ who is a lamb without blemish; yet it must not be reared, but killed and eaten at their own houses as common food, *ver. 22.* Only they must be sure not to eat it with the blood, *ver. 23.* The frequent repetition of which caution intimates what need the people had of it; and what stress God laid upon it. What a mercy it is that we are not under this yoke! We are not dieted as they were: we make no difference between a first calf, or lamb, and the rest that follow: let us therefore answer the gospel-meaning of this law, devoting ourselves and the first of our time and strength to God, as a kind of first fruits for his creatures; and using all our comforts and enjoyments to his praise, and under the direction of his law, as we have them all by his gift.

C H A P. XVI.

In this chapter we have, 1. A repetition of the laws concerning the three yearly feasts; in particular, that of the passover, *ver. 1—8.* That of pentecost, *ver. 9—12.* That of tabernacles, *ver. 13—15.* And the general law concerning the people's attendance on them, *ver. 16, 17.* 2. The institution of an inferior magistracy, and general rules of justice given to those who were called into office, *ver. 18—20.* 3. A caveat against groves and images, *ver. 21, 22.*

1. Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night. 2. Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto the LORD thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the LORD shall choose to place his name there. 3. Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction: (for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste) that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt, all the days of thy life. 4. And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coasts seven days, neither shall there any thing of the flesh which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning. 5. Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee. 6. But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt. 7. And thou shalt roast and eat it in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go into thy tents. 8. Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day shall be a solemn assembly to the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work therein. 9. ¶ Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number thee seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn. 10. And thou

thou shalt keep the feasts of weeks unto the LORD thy God, with a tribute of a free-will offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the LORD thy God, according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee. 11. And thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow that are among you, in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place his name there. 12. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bond-man in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes. 13. ¶ Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine. 14. And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates. 15. Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the LORD thy God, in the place which the LORD shall choose: because the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice. 16. ¶ Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose: in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty. 17. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee.

Much of the communion between God and his people Israel was kept up, and a face of religion preserved in the nation by the three yearly feasts, the institution of which, and the laws concerning them, we have several times met with already; and here they are repeated.

1. The law of the passover: so great a solemnity, that it made the whole month, in the midst of which it was placed, considerable, *ver. 1. Observe the month Abib.* Though one week only of that month was to be kept as a festival, yet their preparations before must be so solemn, and their reflections upon it, and improvements of it afterwards, so serious, as to amount to an observation of the whole month. The month of Abib, or of new fruits, (as the Chaldee translates it) answers to our March, (or part of March, and part of April) and was by a special order from God, in remembrance of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, made the beginning of their year, *Exod. xii. 2.* which before was reckoned to begin in September.

This month they were to keep the passover, in remembrance of their being brought out of Egypt by night, *ver. 1.* The Chaldee paraphrasts (because they came out of Egypt by day-light) there being an express order that they should not stir out of their doors till morning, *Exod. xii. 22.* one of them expounds it thus: *He brought thee out of Egypt, and did wonders by night.* The other, and thou shalt eat the passover by night. The laws concerning it are, (1.) That they must be sure to sacrifice the passover in the place that God should choose, *ver. 2.* and in no other place, *ver. 5, 6, 7.* The passover was itself a sacrifice, hence Christ as our passover is said to be sacrificed for us, *1 Cor. v. 7.* and many other sacrifices were offered during the seven days of the feast, *Numb. xxviii. 19, &c.* which are included here, for they are said to be sacrificed of the flock and the herd, whereas the passover itself was only of the flock, either a lamb or a kid: now no sacrifice was accepted but from the altar that sanctified it; it was therefore necessary that they should go up to the place of the altar; for though the paschal lamb was intirely eaten by the owners, yet it must be killed in the court, the blood sprinkled, and the inwards burned upon the altar. By confining them to the appointed place, he kept them to the appointed rule, which they would have been apt to vary from, and to introduce foolish inventions of their own, had they been permitted to offer these sacrifices within their own gates, from under the inspection of the priests. They were also hereby directed to have their eyes up unto God in the solemnity, and the desire of their hearts towards the remembrance of his name, being appointed to attend there where he had chosen to place his name, *ver. 2. and 6.* But when the solemnity was over, they might turn and go unto their tents, *ver. 7.* Some think they might if they pleased return the very morning after the paschal lamb was killed and eaten, the priests and Levites being sufficient to carry on the rest of the week's work; but the first day of the seven is far from being the day of their dispersion, that it is expressly appointed for a holy convocation, *Lev. xxiii. 7.* *Numb. xxviii. 18.* therefore we must take it as Jonathan's paraphrase expounds it, *in the morning after the end of the feast thou shalt go to thy cities.* And it was the practice to keep together the whole week, *2 Chron. xxxv. 17.*

2. That they must eat unleavened bread for seven days, and no leavened bread must be seen in all their coasts, *ver. 3, 4, 8.* The bread they were confined to is here called bread of affliction, because neither grateful to the taste, nor easy of digestion, and therefore proper to signify the heaviness of their spirits in their bondage, and to keep in remembrance the haste in which they came out, the case being so urgent that they could not stay the leavening of the bread they took with them for their march. The Jewish writers tell us, that the custom of the passover supper was, that the master of the family brake this unleavened bread, and gave to every one a piece of it, saying, *This is (i. e. this signifies, represents, or commemorates, which explains that laying of our Saviour, this is my body) the bread of affliction which your fathers did eat in the land of Egypt.* The gospel meaning of this feast of unleavened bread the apostle gives us, *1 Cor. v. 7. Christ our passover being sacrificed for us,* and we having participated of the blessed fruits of that sacrifice to our comfort, let us keep the feast in a holy conversation, free from the leaven of malice towards our brethren, and hypocrisy towards God, and with the unleavened bread of sincerity and love. Lastly, Observe concerning the passover, for what end it was instituted, that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of Egypt, not only on the day of the passover, or during the seven days of the feast, but all the days of thy life, *ver. 3.* as a constant inducement to obedience. Thus we celebrate the memorial of Christ's death at some times, that we may remember it at all times, as a reason why we should live to him that died for us and rose again.

2. Seven weeks after the passover, the feast of pentecost was to be observed, concerning which they are here directed, 1. From whence to number their seven weeks, from the time thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn, *ver. 9. i. e. from the morrow after the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, for on that day (though it is probable the people did not begin their harvest till the feast was ended) messengers were sent to reap a sheaf of barley, which was to be offered to God as the first-fruits, Lev. xxiii. 10.* Some think it implies a particular care providence would take of their land with respect to the weather, that their harvest should be always ripe and ready for the sickle just at the same time. How they were to keep this feast, (1.) They must bring an offering unto God, *ver. 10.* It is here called a tribute of a free-will offering. It was required of them as a tribute to their sovereign Lord and owner, under whom they held all they had; and yet because the law did not determine the quantum, but it was left to every man's generosity what he would bring, and whatever he brought he must give it cheerfully, it is therefore called a free-will offering. It was a grateful acknowledgement of the goodness of God to them in the mercies of these corn-harvests now finished, and therefore must be according as God had blessed them. Where God sows plentifully he expects to reap accordingly. (2.) They must rejoice before God, *ver. 11.* Holy joy is the heart and soul of thankful praises, which are as the language and expression of holy joy. They must rejoice in their receivings from God, and in their returns of service and sacrifice to him; our duty must be our delight as well as our enjoyments. They must have their very servants to rejoice with them, for remember (*ver. 12.*) that thou wast a bond-man; and would have been very thankful if thy task-masters would have given thee some time and cause for rejoicing; and thy God did bring thee out to keep a feast with gladness; therefore be pleasant with thy servants, and make them easy. And it should seem those general words, thou shalt observe and do these statutes, are added here for a particular reason, because this feast was kept in remembrance of the giving of the law upon mount Sinai, fifty days after they came out of Egypt; now the best way of expressing our thankfulness to God for his favour to us in giving us his law, is to observe and do according to the precepts of it.

3. They must keep the feast of tabernacles, *ver. 13, 14, 15.* Here is no repetition of the law concerning the sacrifices that were to be offered in great abundance at this feast, which we had at large, *Numb. xxix. 12. &c.* because the care of these belonged to the priests and Levites, who had not so much need of a repetition as the people had, and because the spiritual part of the service, which consisted in holy joy, was most pleasing to God, and was to be the perpetual duty of a gospel conversation, which this feast was typical of. Observe what stress is laid upon it here, thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, *ver. 14.* and because the Lord shall bless thee, thou shalt surely rejoice, *ver. 15.* Note, 1. It is the will of God that his people should be a cheerful people. If they that were under the law must rejoice before God, much more must we that are under the grace of the gospel, which makes it our duty not only as here, to rejoice in our feasts, but to rejoice evermore; to rejoice in the Lord always. 2. When we rejoice in God ourselves, we should do what we can to cause others also to rejoice in him, by comforting the mourners, and supplying the necessities, that even the stranger, the fatherless and the widow may rejoice with us. See *Joh. xxix. 13.* 3. We must rejoice in God not only because of what we have received, and are receiving from him daily, but because of what he hath promised, and we expect to receive yet farther from him; because he shall bless thee, therefore thou shalt rejoice. Those that make God their joy, may rejoice in hope, for he is faithful that has promised.

Lastly, The laws concerning the three solemn feasts are summed up, *ver. 16, 17.* as often before, *Exod. xxiii. 16, 17.—xxxiv. 23.* The general commands concerning them are, (1.) That all the males must then make their personal appearance before God, that by their frequent meeting to worship God at the same place, and by the same rule, they might be kept faithful and constant to that holy religion which was established among them. (2.) That none must appear before God empty, but every man must bring some offering or other, in token of a dependence upon God, and gratitude to him. And God was not unreasonable in his demands, let every man but give as he was able, and no more was expected. The same is still the rule of charity, *1 Cor. xvi. 2.* They that give to their power shall be accepted, but they that give beyond their power are accounted worthy of double honour, *2 Cor. viii. 3.* as the poor widow that gave all she had, *Luke xxi. 4.*

18. ¶ Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates which the LORD thy God giveth thee throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment. 19. Thou shalt not wrest judgment, thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. 20. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. 21. ¶ Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the LORD thy God which thou shalt make thee. 22. Neither shalt thou set thee up any image, which the LORD thy God hateth.

Here is, 1. Care taken for the due administration of justice among them, that controversies might be determined, matters in variance adjusted, the injured righted, and the injurious punished. While they were encamped in the wilderness, they had judges and officers, according to their numbers, rulers of thousands and hundreds; *Exod. xviii. 25.* When they came to Canaan, they must have them according to their towns and cities, in all their gates; for the courts of judgment sat in the gates.

Now, 1. Here is a commission given to their inferior magistrates. Judges to try and pass sentence, and officers to execute their sentences, shalt thou make thee. However the persons were pitched upon, whether by the nomination of their sovereign, or by the election of the people, the powers were ordained of God, *Rom. xiii. 1.* And it was great mercy to the people thus to have justice brought to their doors, that it might be more expedite and less expensive; a blessing we of this nation ought to be very thankful for. Pursuant to this law, besides the great Sanhedrim that sat at the sanctuary, consisting of 70 elders, and a president, there was in the larger cities, such as had in them above 120 families, a court of 23 judges; in the smaller cities a court of three judges. See this law revived by Jehoshaphat, *2 Chron. xix. 5—8.*

2. Here is a command given to these magistrates to do justice in execution of the trust reposed in them. Better not judge at all, than not judge with just judgment according to the direction of the law, and the evidence of the fact. The judges are here cautioned not to do wrong to any, (*ver. 19.*) nor to take any gifts, which would tempt them to do wrong. This law had been given before, *Exod. xxiii. 8.* And they are charged to do justice to all,

all, ver. 20. *That which is altogether just shalt thou follow.* Adhere to the principles of justice; act by the rules of justice, countenance the demands of justice; imitate the patrons of justice, and pursue with resolution that which appears to be just. *Justice, justice shalt thou follow.* This is that which the magistrate is to have in his eye, on this he must be intent, and to this all personal regards must be sacrificed, to do right to all, and wrong to none.

2. Care taken for the preventing of all conformity to the idolatrous customs of the heathen, ver. 21, 22. They must not only not join with the idolaters in their worships, nor visit their groves, nor bow before the images which they had set up, but, (1.) They must not plant a grove, nor so much as a tree, near God's altar, lest they would make it look like the altars of the false gods. They made groves the places of their worship, either to make it secret, but that which is true and good desires the light rather; or to make it solemn, but the worship of the true God has enough in itself to make it so, and needs not the advantage of such a circumstance. (2.) They must not set up any images, statue or pillar to the honour of God, for it is a thing which the Lord hates; nothing belies or reproaches him more, nor tends more to corrupt and debauch the minds of men, than representing and worshipping that God by an image who is an infinite and eternal Spirit.

C H A P. XVII.

The charge of this chapter is, (1.) Concerning the purity and perfection of all those animals that were offered in sacrifices, ver. 1. (2.) Concerning the punishment of those that worshipped idols, ver. 2—7. (3.) Concerning appeals from the inferior courts to the great Sanhedrim, ver. 8—13. (4.) Concerning the choice and duty of a king, ver. 14—20.

1. **T**HOU shalt not sacrifice unto the LORD thy God any bullock or sheep, wherein is blemish, or any evil-favouredness: for that is an abomination unto the LORD thy God. 2. ¶ If there be found among you within any of thy gates which the LORD thy God giveth thee, man or woman that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the LORD thy God, in transgressing his covenant, 3. And hath gone and served other gods and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded: 4. And it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and enquired diligently, and behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel: 5. Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman (which have committed that wicked thing) unto thy gates, even that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones till they die. 6. At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death, be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. 7. The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hands of all the people: so thou shalt put the evil away from among you.

Here is, 1. A law for preserving the honour of God's worship, by providing that no creature that had any blemish should be offered in sacrifice to him, ver. 1. This caveat we have often met with, *Thou shalt not sacrifice that which has any blemish*, which renders it unlighty, or any evil matter or thing, (as the following word might better be rendered) any sickness or weakness, though not discernible at first view: It is an abomination to God. God is the best of beings, and therefore whatsoever he is served with ought to be the best in its kind. And the Old Testament sacrifices in a special manner must be so, because they were types of Christ, who is a lamb without blemish or spot, 1 Pet. i. 9. perfectly pure from all sin and all appearance of it. In the latter times of the Jewish church, when by the captivity in Babylon they were cured of idolatry, yet they were charged with profaneness in the breach of this law, that they offered the blind and the lame and the sick for sacrifices, Mal. i. 8.

2. A law for the punishing those that worshipped false gods. It was made a capital crime to seduce others to idolatry, chap. xiii. here it is made no less to be seduced. If the blind thus mislead the blind, both must fall into the ditch. Thus God would possess them with a dread of that sin, which they must conclude exceeding sinful, when so many sanguinary laws were made against it, and would deter those from it that would not otherwise be persuaded against it: and yet the law which works death proved ineffectual.

See here, 1. What the crime was against which the law was levelled, serving or worshipping other gods, ver. 3. That which was the most ancient and plausible idolatry is instanced in, worshipping the sun, moon, and stars; and if that was so detestable a thing, much more was it so to worship stocks and stones, or the representation of mean and contemptible animals. Of this it is said, (1.) That it is what God had not commanded. He had again and again forbidden it, but it is thus expressed, to intimate that if there had been no more against it, this had been enough, for in the worship of God his institution and appointment must be our rule and warrant; and that God never commanded his worshippers to debase themselves so far as to do homage to their fellow creatures: had God commanded them to do it, they might justly have complained of it as a reproach and disparagement to them; yet when he has forbidden it, they will from a spirit of contradiction put this indignity upon themselves. (2.) That it is wickedness in the sight of God, ver. 2. Be it never so industriously concealed, he sees it and be it never so ingeniously palliated, he hates it; it is a sin in itself exceeding heinous, and the highest affront that can be done to Almighty God. (3.) That it is a transgression of the covenant. It was on this condition that God took them to be his peculiar people, that they should serve and worship him only as their God; so that if they gave the honour to any other which was due to him alone, the covenant was void, and all the benefit of it forfeited. Other sins were transgressions of the command, but this was a transgression of the covenant. It was a spiritual adultery, which breaks the marriage-bond. (4.) That it is abominable in Israel, ver. 4. Idolatry was bad enough in any, but it was particularly abominable in Israel, a people so blessed with peculiar discoveries of the will and favour of the only true and living God.

2. How must it be tried. Upon information given of it, or any ground of suspicion that any person whatsoever, man or woman, had served other gods, (1.) Enquiry must be made, ver. 4. Though it appears not certain at first, it may afterwards upon search appear so; and if it can be discovered, it must not be unpunished; if not, yet the very enquiry concerning it would possess the country with dread of it. (2.) Evidence must be given in, ver. 6. How heinous and dangerous soever the crime is, yet they must not punish any for it, unless there were good proof against them, by two witnesses at least. They must not under pretence of honouring God wrong an innocent man. This law, which requires two witnesses in case of life, we had before, Numb. xxxv. 30. it is quoted Matth. xviii. 16.

3. What sentence must be passed and executed. So great a punishment as death, so great a death as stoning must be inflicted on the idolater, be it man or woman, for the infirmity of the weaker sex would be no excuse, ver. 5. The place of execution must be at the gate of the city, that the shame might be the greater to the criminal, and the warning the more public to others. The hands of the witnesses, in this case as in other cases, must be first upon him, that is they must cast the first stone at him, thereby avowing their testimony, and solemnly imprecating the guilt of his blood upon themselves if their evidence were false. This custom might be of use to deter men from false witness bearing. The witnesses are really, and therefore it was required they should be actually, the death of the malefactor. But they must be followed, and execution completed by the hands of all the people, who were thus to testify their detestation of the crime, and to put the evil away from among them, as before, chap. xiii. 9.

8. ¶ If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the LORD thy God shall choose; 9. And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment. 10. And thou shalt do according to the sentence which they of that place (which the LORD shall choose) shall shew thee, and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee: 11. According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, to the right hand nor to the left. 12. And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest (that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God) or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. 13. And all the people shall hear and fear, and do no more presumptuously.

Courts of judgment were ordered to be erected in every city, chap. xi. 18. and they were empowered to hear and determine causes according to law, both those which we call pleas of the crown, and those between party and party; and we may suppose that ordinarily they ended the matters that were brought before them, and their sentence was definitive: but, 1. It is here taken for granted, that sometimes a case might come into their court too difficult for those inferior judges to determine, who could not be brought to be so learned in the laws as those that presided in the higher courts. So that (to speak in the language of our law) they must find a special verdict, and take time to advise before the giving of judgment, ver. 8. If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, which it would be no dishonour to the judges to own the difficulty of, suppose it between blood and blood, the blood of a person which cried, and the blood of him that was charged with the murder, which was demanded; when it was doubtful upon the evidence whether it was wilful or casual; or between plea and plea, the plea, that is, the bill, or declaration of the plaintiff, and the plea of the defendant; between stroke and stroke, in the actions of assault and battery; in these and the like cases, though the evidence were plain, yet doubts may rise about the sense and meaning of the law, and the application of it to the particular case.

2. These difficult cases, which hitherto had been brought to Moses according to Jethro's advice, were after his death, to be brought to the supreme power, wherever it was lodged, whether in a judge, when there was such an extraordinary person raised up, and qualified for that great service, as Othniel, Deborah, Gideon, &c. or in the high-priest, when he was by the eminency of his gifts called of God to preside in public affairs, as Eli; or, (if no singular person were marked by heaven for this honour) then the priests and Levites, (or in the priests that were Levites) that not only attended the sanctuary, but met in counsel, to receive appeals from the inferior courts, who might reasonably be supposed not only to be best qualified by their learning and experience, but to have the best assistance of the divine Spirit to decide doubts, ver. 9, 11, 12. They are not appointed to consult the Urim and Thummim, for it is supposed that was to be consulted only in cases relating to the public, either to the body of the people, or the prince: but in ordinary cases, the wisdom and integrity of those that sat at the stern must be relied on, their judgment concerning the meaning of the law must be acquiesced in, and the sentence must be passed accordingly: and though their judgment had not the divine authority of an oracle, yet besides the moral certainty it had, as the judgment of knowing, prudent, and experienced men, it had the advantage of a divine promise implied in these words, ver. 9. *They shall shew thee the sentence of judgment;* and the support of a divine institution, by which they were made the supreme judicature of a nation.

3. The definitive sentence given by the judge, priest, or great council, must be obeyed by the parties concerned, upon pain of death. *Thou shalt do according to their sentence*, ver. 10. Thou shalt observe to do it, thou shalt not decline from it (ver. 11.) to the right hand or to the left. Note, It is for the honour of God, and the welfare of a people, that the authority of the higher power be supported, and the due order of government observed; that those be obeyed who are appointed to rule, and that every soul be subject to them in all those things that fall within their commission. Though the party thought himself injured by the sentence (as every man is apt to be partial in his own cause) yet he must needs be subject, must stand to the award, how

how unpleasing soever, and bear, or lose, or pay, according to it, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. But if an inferior judge contradict the sentence of the higher court, and will not execute the orders of it, or a private person refuse to conform himself to their sentence, the contumacy must be punished with death, though the matter were never so small in which the opposition was made, *That man shall die, and all the people shall hear and fear*, ver. 12, 13. See here, (1.) The evil of disobedience, rebellion and stubbornness, from a spirit of contradiction and opposition to God, or those in authority under him, from a principle of contempt, and self-willfulness, are as witchcraft and idolatry. To differ in opinion from weakness and infirmity may be excused, and must be borne with, but to do presumptuously in pride and wickedness, (as the ancient translations explain it) this is to take up arms against the government, and is an affront to him by whom the powers that be are ordained. (2.) The design of punishment, that others may hear and fear, and not do the like. Some would be so considerate as to infer the heinousness of the offence from the grievousness of the penalty, and therefore would detest it; and others would so far consult their own safety, as to crook their humours by conforming to the sentence, rather than to sin against their own heads, and forfeit their lives by going contrary to it. From this law the apostle infers the foreness of the punishment they will be thought worthy of, that trample on the authority of the Son of God, *Heb.* x. 28, 29.

14. ¶ When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shall possess it, and shall dwell therein, and shall say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me: 15. Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. 16. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. 17. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. 18. And it shall be when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites. 19. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: 20. That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left; to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom: he and his children in the midst of Israel.

After the laws which concerned subjects, fifty follow the laws which concern kings; for they that rule others, must themselves remember that they are under command. Here laws are given,

1. To the electors of the empire, what rules they must go by in making their choice, ver. 14, 15. (1.) It is here supposed that the people would, in process of time, be desirous of a king, whose royal pomp and power would be thought to make their nation look great among their neighbours. Their having a king is neither promised as a mercy, nor commanded as a duty, nothing could be better for them than the divine regimen they were under, but it is permitted them, if they desired it; so that care was taken that the ends of government were answered, and God's laws duly observed and put in execution, they shall not be tied to any one form of government, but shall be welcome to have a king. Though something irregular is supposed to be the principle of the desire, that they might be like the nations, (whereas God many ways distinguished them from the nations) yet God would indulge them in it, because he intended to serve his own purposes by it, in making the regal government typical of the kingdom of the Messiah. (2.) They are directed in their choice. If they will have a king over them, as God foresaw they would, (though it do not appear that ever the motion was made till almost 400 years after) then they must, (1.) Ask counsel at God's mouth, and make him king whom God shall choose; and happy it was for them that they had an oracle to consult in so weighty an affair, and a God to choose for them who knows infallibly what every man is, and will be. Kings are God's vicegerents, and therefore it is fit he should have the choosing of them; God had himself been in a particular manner Israel's king, and if they set another over them under him, it was necessary he should nominate the person. Accordingly when the people desired a king, they applied themselves to Samuel, a prophet of the Lord; and afterwards David, Solomon, Jeroboam, Jehu, and others, were chosen by prophets; and the people are reproved for not observing this law, *Hof.* viii. 4. *They have set up kings, but not by me.* In all cases God's choice, if we can but know it, must direct, determine, and over-rule ours. (2.) They must not choose a foreigner under pretence of strengthening their alliances, or of the extraordinary fitness of the person, lest a strange king should introduce strange customs or usages, contrary to those that were established by the divine law: but he must be one from among thy brethren, that he may be a type of Christ, who is *bone of our bone*, *Heb.* ii. 14.

2. Laws as here given to the prince that should be elected, for the due administration of the government.

1. He must carefully avoid every thing that would divert him from God and religion. Riches, honours, and pleasures, are the three great hindrances of godliness, (*the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life*) especially to those in high stations: against these therefore the king is here warned. 1. He must not gratify the love of honour by multiplying horses ver. 16. He that rode upon a horse (a stately creature) in a country where asses and mules were generally used, looked very great, and therefore though he might have horses for his own saddle, and chariots, yet he must not set servants on horse-back, *Eccl.* x. 7. nor have many horses for his officers and guards; when God was their king, his judges rode on asses, *Judges* v. 10.—xii. 14. nor must he multiply horses for war, lest he should trust too much to them, *Psal.* xx. 7.—xxxiii. 17. *Hof.* xiv. 3. The reason here given against his multiplying horses is, because it would raise a greater correspondence with Egypt, (which furnished Canaan with horses, *1 Kings*

x. 28, 29.) than it was fit the Israel of God should have, who were brought thence with such a high hand. *Ye shall return no more that way.* for fear of being infected with the idolatries of Egypt, (*Lev.* xviii. 3.) to which they were very prone. Note, We should take heed of that commerce or conversation, by which we are in danger of being drawn into sin. If Israel must not return to Egypt, they must not trade with Egypt: Solomon got no good by it. 2. He must not gratify the love of pleasure by multiplying wives, ver. 17, as Solomon did to his undoing, *1 Kings* xi. 1. that his heart, being set upon them, turn not away from business, and every thing that is serious, and especially from the exercise of piety and devotion, to which nothing is a greater enemy than the indulgence of the flesh. 3. He must not gratify the love of riches by greatly multiplying silver and gold. A competent treasure is allowed him, and he is not forbidden to be a good husband of it, but (1.) He must not greatly multiply money so as to oppress his people by raising it, (as Solomon seems to have done, *1 Kings* xii. 4.) nor so as to deceive himself, by trusting to it and setting his heart upon it, *Psal.* lxxii. 10. (2.) He must not multiply it to himself. David multiplied silver and gold, but it was for the service of God, *1 Chron.* xxix. 4.) not for himself; for his people, not for his own family.

2. He must carefully apply himself to the law of God, and make that his rule. This must be to him better than all riches, honours, and pleasure, than many horses or many wives, better than thousands of gold and silver.

2. He must write himself a copy of the law out of the original, which was in the custody of the priests that attended the sanctuary, ver. 18. Some think he was to write only this book of Deuteronomy, which is an abstract of the law, and the precepts of which being mostly moral and judicial concerned the king, more than the laws in Leviticus, and Numbers, which the priests were chiefly bound to acquaint themselves with. Others think he must transcribe all the five books of Moses, which are called by the law: and which were preserved together as the foundation of their religion. Now, (1.) Though the king might be presumed to have very fair copies by him from his ancestors, yet besides those, he must have one of his own: it might be presumed, theirs were worn with constant use, he must have a fresh one to begin the world with. (2.) Though he had secretaries about him whom he might employ to write this copy, and who perhaps could write a better hand than he, yet he must do it himself, with his own hand, for the honour of the law, and that he might think no act of religion below him, to inure himself to labour and study, and especially that he might thereby be obliged to take particular notice of every part of the law, and by writing it might imprint it in his mind. Note, It is of great use for each of us to write down what we observe as most affecting and edifying to us, out of the scriptures and good books, and the sermons we hear. A prudent pen may go far towards making up the deficiencies of the memory, and the furnishing of the treasures of the good householder with things new and old. (3.) He must do this even when he sits upon the throne of his kingdom; supposing he had not done it before. When he begins to apply himself to business, he must apply himself to this in the first place. He that sits upon the throne of a kingdom cannot but have his hands full. The affairs of his kingdom both at home and abroad call for a larger share of his time and thoughts, and yet he must write himself a copy of the law. Let not those that call themselves men of business, think that will excuse them from making religion their business; nor let great men think it any disparagement to them to write for themselves those great things of God's law which he hath written to them, *Hof.* viii. 12.

2. Having a bible by him of his own writing, he must not think it enough to keep it in his cabinet, but he must read therein all the days of his life, ver. 19. It is not enough to have bibles, but we must use them, use them daily, as the duty and necessity of every day requires: our souls must have their constant meals of that manna; and, if well digested, it will be true nourishment and strength to them. As the body is receiving benefit by its food continually, and not only when it is eating, so doth the soul by the word of God, if it meditate therein day and night, *Psal.* i. 2. And we must persevere in the use of this written word of God as long as we live. Christ's scholars never learn above their bibles, but will have constant occasion for them till they come to that world where knowledge and love will both be made perfect.

3. His writing and reading were all nothing, if he did not reduce to practice what he wrote and read, ver. 20. The word of God is not designed merely to be an entertaining subject of speculation, but to be a commanding rule of conversation. Let him know,

1. What dominion his religion must have over him, and what influence it must have upon him. (1.) It must possess him with a very reverent and awful regard to the divine majesty and authority. He must learn, (and thus the most learned must be ever learning) to fear the Lord his God: and as high as he is, must remember that God is above him, and whatever fear his subjects owe to him, that and much more he owes to God as his king. (2.) It must engage him to a constant observance of the law of God, and a conscientious obedience to it, as the product of that fear. He must keep all the words of this law (he is *custos utriusque tabulae*) not only to take care that others do them, but to do himself as an humble servant to the God of heaven, and a good example to his inferiors. (3.) It must keep him humble; how much soever he is advanced, let him keep his spirit low, and let the fear of his God prevent the contempt of his brethren; and let not his heart be lifted up above them, so as to carry himself haughtily or disdainfully towards them, and to trample upon them; let him not conceit himself better than they, because he is bigger, and makes a fairer shew, but let him remember that he is the minister of God for them for good, (*major singulis, but minor universis.*) It must prevent his errors, either on the right hand or on the left: (for there are errors on both hands) and keep him right in all instances to his God and to his duty.

2. What advantage his religion would be of to him. They that fear God, and keep his commandments, will certainly fare the better for it in this world. The greatest monarch in the world may receive more benefit by religion, than by all the wealth and power of his monarchy. It will be of advantage, (1.) To his person. *He shall prolong his days in his kingdom.* We find in the history of the kings of Judah, that generally the best reigns were the longest; except when God shortened them for the punishment of the people; as Josiah's. (2.) To his family; his children also shall prosper. Entail religion upon posterity, and God will entail a blessing upon it.

C H A P. XVIII.

In this chapter, (1.) The rights and the revenues of the church are settled, and rules given concerning the Levites ministrations and maintenance, ver. 1—8. (2.) The caution against the idolatrous abominable customs of the heathen is repeated, ver. 9—14. (3.) A promise is given them of the spirit of prophecy to continue among them, and to center at last in Christ the great prophet, ver. 15—18.

Wrath

Wrath threatened against those that despise prophecy, ver. 19. or counterfeited it, ver. 20. and a rule given for the trial of it, ver. 21, 22.

1. **T**HE priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and his inheritance. 2. Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the LORD is their inheritance, as he hath said unto them. 3. ¶ And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep; and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw. 4. The first-fruit also of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thy oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep shalt thou give him. 5. For the LORD thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes; to stand to minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons for ever. 6. ¶ And if a Levite come from any of thy gates out of all Israel, where he sojourned, and come with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the LORD shall choose: 7. Then he shall minister in the name of the LORD his God, as all his brethren the Levites do, which stand there before the LORD. 8. They shall have like portions to eat, beside that which cometh of the sale of his patrimony.

Magistracy and ministry are two divine institutions of admirable use for the support and advancement of the kingdom of God among men; laws concerning the former we had in the close of the foregoing chapter, directions are in this given concerning the latter. Land-marks are here set between the estates of priests and people. 1. Care is taken that the priests entangle not themselves with the affairs of this life, nor enrich themselves with the wealth of this world, they have better things to mind. *They shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel*, i. e. no share either in the spoils taken in war, or in the land that was to be divided by lot, ver. 1. Their warfare and husbandry are both spiritual, and enough to fill their hands both with work and profit, and to content them. *The Lord is their inheritance*, ver. 1. Note, Those that have God for their inheritance, according to the new covenant, should not be greedy of great things in the world; neither gripe what they have, nor grasp at more, but look upon all present things with the indifference which becomes those that believe God to be all-sufficient.

2. Care is likewise taken that they want not any of the comforts and conveniences of this life. Though God, who is a spirit, is their inheritance, it doth not therefore follow, that they must live upon the air: No, 1. The people must provide for them. They must have their *due from the people*, ver. 3. Their maintenance must not depend upon the generosity of the people, but they must be by law intitled to it. He that is taught in the word, ought in justice to communicate to him that teacheth him; and he that has the benefit of solemn religious assemblies, to contribute to the comfortable support of those that preside in such assemblies. (1.) The priests that in their courses served at the altar, had their share of the sacrifices, viz. the peace-offerings, that were brought while they were in waiting; besides the breast and shoulder which were appointed them before, Lev. vii. 32, 33, 34. the cheeks and maw are here ordered to be given them; so far was the law from diminishing what was already granted, that it gave them an augmentation. (2.) The first-fruits which arose within such a precinct were brought in, as it should seem, to the priests that resided among them, for their maintenance in the country; the first of their corn and wine for food, and the first of their fleece for clothing, ver. 4. for the priests who were employed to teach others, ought themselves to learn, having food and raiment, to be therewith content. The first-fruits were devoted to God, and he constituted the priests his receivers; and if God reckons what is in general given to the poor lent to him, to be repaid with interest, much more what is in particular given to poor ministers. There is a good reason given for this constant charge upon their estates, ver. 5. because the Levites were *chosen of God*; and his choice must be owned and countenanced, and those honoured by us whom he honours; and *because they stood to minister*, and ought to be recompensed for their attendance and labour, especially since it was *in the name of the Lord*, by his warrant in his service, and for his praise, and this charge entailed upon his seed for ever; those who were thus engaged and thus employed, ought to have all due encouragement given them, as some of the most needful, useful members of their commonwealth.

2. The priests must not themselves stand in one another's light. If a priest that by the law was obliged to serve at the altar, only in his turn, and was paid for that, should out of his great affection to the sanctuary, devote himself to a constant attendance there, and quit the ease and pleasure of the city in which he had his lot, for the satisfaction of serving the altar, the priests, whose turn it was to attend, must admit him both to join in the work, and to share in the wages, and not grudge him either the honour of the one, or the profit of the other, though it might seem to break in upon them, ver. 6, 7, 8. Note, A hearty pious zeal to serve God and his Church, though it may a little incroach upon a settled order, and there may be somewhat in it that looks irregular, yet ought to be gratified, and not discouraged. He that appears to have a hearty affection to the sanctuary, and loves dearly to be employed in the service of it, *in God's name let him minister*, he shall be as welcome to God, as the Levites whose course it was to minister, and should be so to them. The settling of the courses was intended rather to secure those to the work that were not willing to do so much, than to exclude any that were willing to do more. And he that thus serves as a volunteer, shall have as good pay as the pressed men, *besides that which comes of the sale of his patrimony*. The Church of Rome obliges those who leave their estates to go into a monastery, to bring the profits of their estates with them into the common stock of the monastery, for gain is their godliness, but here it is ordered that the pious devotee should reserve to himself the produce of his patrimony: for religion and the ministry were never appointed of God, however they have been abused by men, to serve a secular interest.

9. ¶ When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. 10. There

shall not be found among you *any one* that maketh his son, or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, as an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch. 11. Or a charmer, or a confuter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer: 12. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations, the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. 13. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. 14. For these nations which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto the observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.

One would not think there had been so much need, as it seems there was to arm the people of Israel against the infection of the idolatrous customs of the Canaanites. Was it possible that a people so blessed with divine institutions should ever admit the brutish and barbarous inventions of men and devils? Were they in any danger of making those their tutors and directors in religion, whom God had made their captives and tributaries? It seems there was; and therefore after many like cautions, they are charged not to do after the abominations of those nations, ver. 9.

1. Some particulars are instanced in: As, (1.) The consecrating of their children to Moloch, an idol, that represented the sun, by making them to pass through the fire, and sometimes consuming them as sacrifices in the fire, ver. 10. See the law against this before, Lev. xviii. 21. (2.) Using arts of divination, to get the unnecessary knowledge of things to come; *enchantments, witchcrafts, charms*, &c. by which that power and knowledge which is peculiar to God was attributed to the devil, to the great reproach both of God's counsels and of his providence, ver. 10, 11. One would wonder such arts and works of darkness, so senseless and absurd, so impious and profane, could be found in a country where divine revelation shone so clear, yet we find remains of them even where Christ's holy religion is known and professed; such are the powers and policies of the rulers of the darkness of this world. But let those that give heed to fortune-tellers, or go to wizards for the discovery of things secret, that use spells for the cure of diseases, are in any league or acquaintance with familiar spirits, or hold confederacy with those that are, let them know that they can have no fellowship with God while thus they have fellowship with devils. It is amazing to think there should be any pretenders of this kind in such a land, and day of light, as we live in.

2. Some reasons are given against their conformity to the customs of the Gentiles. 1. Because it would make them abominable to God. The things themselves being hateful to him, those that do them are an abomination; and miserable is that creature that is become odious to its Creator, ver. 12. See the malignity and mischievousness of sin: that must needs be an evil thing indeed, which provokes the God of mercy to detest the work of his own hands. 2. Because these abominable practices had been the ruin of the Canaanites, which ruin they were not only the witnesses but the instruments of. It would be the most inexcusable folly, as well as the most unpardonable impiety, for them to practise themselves those very things, for which they had been employed so severely to chastise others. Did the land spue out the abominations of the Canaanites, and shall Israel lick up the vomit? 3. Because they were *better taught*, ver. 13, 14. It is an argument like that of the apostles against Christians walking as the Gentiles walked, Ephes. iv. 17, 18. *Ye have not so learned Christ*. It is true, these nations whom God gave up to their own hearts lusts, and suffered to walk in their own ways, Acts xiv. 16. did thus corrupt themselves, but thou art not thus abandoned by the grace of God, *the Lord thy God has not suffered thee to do so*, thou art instructed in divine things, and hast fair warning given thee of the evil of those practices, and therefore whatever others do, it is expected that thou shouldest be *perfect with the Lord thy God*, i. e. that thou shouldest give divine honours to him, to him only and to no other, and not mix any of the superstitious customs of the heathen with his institutions. One of the Chaldee paraphrasts here takes notice of God's furnishing them with the oracle of Urim and Thummim, as a preservative from all unlawful arts of divination. They were fools who would go to consult the father of lies, when they had such a ready way of consulting the God of truth.

15. ¶ The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken. 16. According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb, in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God; neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. 17. And the LORD said unto me, they have well spoken that which they have spoken. 18. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. 19. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. 20. But the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. 21. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? 22. When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him.

Here is, 1. The promise of the great Prophet, with a command to receive him, and hearken unto him. Now,

1. Some think it is the promise of a succession of prophets, that should for many ages be kept up in Israel. Besides the priests and Levites, their ordinary ministers, whose office it was to teach Jacob God's law, they should

have prophets, extraordinary ministers, to reprove them for their faults, and to mind them of their duty, and to foretel things to come, judgments for warning, and deliverances for their comfort. Having these prophets, (1.) They need not use divinations, nor consult with familiar spirits, for they might enquire of God's prophets even concerning their private affairs, as Saul did when he was in quest of his father's asses, 1 Sam. ix. 6. (2.) They could not miss the way of their duty through ignorance or mistake, nor differ in their opinions about it, having prophets among them, whom in every difficult doubtful case they might advise with and appeal to. These prophets were like unto Moses in some respects, though far inferior to him, Deut. xxxiv. 10.

2. Whether a succession of prophets be included in this promise or no, we are sure it is primarily intended as a promise of Christ, and it is the clearest promise of him that is in all the law of Moses. It is expressly applied to our Lord Jesus as the Messiah promised, Acts iii. 22. and vii. 37. and the people had an eye to this promise when they said concerning him, *This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world*, John vi. 14. and it was his Spirit that spake in all the other prophets, 1 Pet. i. 11. Observe,

1. What it is that is here promised concerning Christ: what God promised Moses at mount Sinai, which he relates, ver. 18. he promised the people, ver. 15. in God's name, (1.) That there should come a Prophet, great above all prophets, by whom God would make known himself and his will to the children of men, more fully and clearly than ever he had done before. He is the light of the world, as prophecy was of the Jewish Church, Job. viii. 12. He is the Word by whom God speaks to us, John i. 1. Heb. i. 1. (2.) That God would raise him up from the midst of them. In his birth he should be one of that nation, should live among them and be sent to them. In his resurrection he should be raised up at Jerusalem, and from thence his doctrine should go forth to all the world; thus God having raised up his Son Christ Jesus, sent him to bless us. (3.) That he should be like unto Moses, only as much above him, as the other prophets came short of him. Moses was such a prophet as was a law giver to Israel, and their deliverer out of Egypt; and so was Christ, he not only teaches, but rules and saves; Moses was the founder of a new dispensation, by signs and wonders and mighty deeds; and so was Christ, by which he proved himself a teacher come from God. Was Moses faithful? So was Christ? Moses as a servant, but Christ as a Son. (4.) That God would put his words in his mouth, ver. 18. What messages God had to send to the children of men, he would send them by him, and give him full instructions what to say and do as a prophet. Hence our Saviour saith, John vii. 16. *My doctrine is not mine originally, but his that sent me*. So that this great promise is performed; this Prophet is come, even Jesus, it is he that should come, and we are to look for no other.

2. The agreeableness of this designed dispensation with the people's avowed choice and desire at mount Sinai, ver. 16, 17. There God had spoken to them in thunder and lightning, out of the midst of the fire and thick darkness; every word made their ears tingle and their hearts tremble, and the whole congregation ready to die with fear: in this fright they begged hard that God would not speak to them in this manner any more, they could not bear it, it would drive them out of their wits: but that he would speak to them by men like themselves, by Moses now, and afterwards by other prophets like unto him. Well saith God, it shall be so; they shall be spoken to by men, whose terrors shall not make them afraid; and to crown the favour beyond what they were able to ask or think, in the fulness of time the word itself should be made flesh, and they should see his glory as of the only begotten of the Father, not as at mount Sinai, full of majesty and terror, but full of grace and truth, John i. 14. Thus, in answer to the request of those who were struck with amazement by the law, God promised the incarnation of his Son, though we may suppose it far from the thoughts of them that made the request.

3. A charge and command given to all people to hear and believe, hear and obey this great Prophet here promised, unto him ye shall hearken, ver. 15. and whoever will not hearken to him shall be surely and severely reckoned with for his contempt, ver. 19. *I will require it of him*. God himself applied this to our Lord Jesus in the voice that came out of the excellent glory, Matth. xvii. 5. *Hear ye him, i. e. this is he concerning whom it was said by Moses of old, unto him ye shall hearken; and Moses and Elias then stood by and assented to it*. The sentence here passed on those that hearken not to this Prophet is repeated and ratified in the New Testament. *He that believeth not the Son, the wrath of God abideth on him*, John iii. 36. *And how shall we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from Heaven?* Heb. xii. 25. The Chaldee paraphrase here reads it, *My word shall require it of him; which can be no other than a divine person, Christ the eternal Word, to whom the father has committed all judgment, and by whom he will at the last day judge the world*. Whoever turns a deaf ear to Jesus Christ, it is at their peril, the same that is the prophet is to be their judge, John xii. 48.

2. Here is a caution against false prophets.

1. By way of threatening against the pretenders themselves, ver. 20. Whoever sets up for a prophet, and produceth either a commission from a false god, as the prophets of Baal, or a false and counterfeit commission from the true God, it shall be deemed and adjudged no less than high-treason against the crown and dignity of the King of kings, and that traitor shall be put to death, (ver. 20.) viz. by the judgment of the great Sanhedrin, which in process of time sat at Jerusalem: and therefore our Saviour saith, that a prophet could not perish but at Jerusalem, and lays the blood of the prophets at Jerusalem's door, Luke xiii. 33, 34. whom God therefore himself would punish, yet these false prophets were supported.

2. By way of direction to the people, that they might not be imposed upon by pretenders; of which there were many, as appears, Jer. xxiii. 25. Ezek. xiii. 6. 1 Kings xxii. 6. It is a very proper question which they are supposed to ask, ver. 21. Since it is so great a duty to hearken to the true prophets, and yet so great a danger of being misled by false prophets, *How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken?* By what marks may we discover a cheat? Note, It highly concerns us to have a right touchstone wherewith to try the word we hear, that we may know what that word is which the Lord has not spoken. Whatever is directly repugnant to sense, to the light and law of nature, and to the plain sense of the written word, we may be sure is not that which the Lord hath spoken; nor that which gives countenance and encouragement to sin, or has a manifest tendency to the destruction of piety or charity; far be it from God that he should contradict himself. The rule here given in answer to this enquiry was adapted chiefly to that state, ver. 22. If there was any cause to suspect the sincerity of a prophet, let them observe if he gave them any sign, or foretold something to come, and the event was not according to his prediction, they might be sure he was not sent of God. This doth not refer so much to the foretelling of mercies and judgments, though as to those and the difference between the prediction of mercies and judgment, there is a rule of discerning between truth and falsehood laid down by the prophet, Jer. xxviii. 8, 9. but rather to the giving of signs on purpose to confirm their mission. Though the sign did come to pass, yet that would not serve

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to prove their mission, if they called them to serve other gods: that point had been already settled, Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3. But if the sign did not come to pass that would serve to disprove their mission. When Moses cast his rod upon the ground (it is Bishop Patrick's explication of this) and said it should become a serpent, if it had not accordingly been turned into a serpent, Moses had been a false prophet: if when Elijah called for fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, and none had come, he had been no better than the prophets of Baal. Samuel's mission was proved by this, *That God let none of his words fall to the ground*, 1 Sam. iii. 19, 20. And by the miracles Christ wrought, especially by that great sign he gave of his resurrection the third day, which came to pass as he foretold, it appeared that he was a teacher come from God. Lastly, They are bid not to be afraid of a false prophet; i. e. not to be afraid of the judgment such an one might denounce to amuse people and strike terror upon them; not to be afraid of executing the law upon him, when upon a strict and impartial scrutiny it appeared that he was a false prophet. This command not to fear a false prophet, implies that a true prophet who proved his commission by clear and undeniable proofs was to be feared, and it was at their peril if they offered him any violence, or put any slight upon him.

C H A P. XIX.

The laws which Moses had been hitherto repeating and urging, mostly concerned the acts of religion and devotion towards God; but here he comes more fully to prove the duties of righteousness between man and man. This chapter relates, (1.) To the sixth commandment, Thou shalt not kill, ver. 1—13. (2.) To the eighth commandment, Thou shalt not steal, ver. 14. (3.) To the ninth commandment, Thou shalt not bear false witness, ver. 15—21.

1. **W**HEN the LORD thy God hath cut off the nations, whose land the LORD thy God giveth thee, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their cities, and their houses; 2. Thou shalt separate three cities for thee in the midst of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it. 3. Thou shalt prepare thee a way, and divide the coasts of thy land (which the LORD thy God giveth thee to inherit) into three parts, that every slayer may flee thither. 4. ¶ And this is the case of the slayer which shall flee thither, that he may live: Whoso killeth his neighbour ignorantly, whom he hated not in time past, 5. As when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour, to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour, that he die; he shall flee unto one of those cities, and live: 6. Left the avenger of the blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot, and overtake him, because the way is long, and slay him, whereas he was not worthy of death, inasmuch as he hated him not in time past. 7. Wherefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt separate three cities for thee. 8. And if the LORD thy God enlarge thy coast, (as he hath sworn unto thy fathers) and give thee all the land which he promised to give unto thy fathers; 9. (If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the LORD thy God, and to walk ever in his ways) then shalt thou add three cities more for thee, besides these three: 10. That innocent blood be not shed in the land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and so blood be upon thee. 11. ¶ But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally, that he die, and flee into one of these cities: 12. Then the elders of his city shall send, and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. 13. Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee.

It was one of the precepts given to the sons of Noah, that *whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed*, that is, by the avenger of blood, Gen. ix. 6. Now here we have the law settled between blood and blood, between the blood of the murdered, and the blood of the murderer, and effectual provision made,

1. That the cities of refuge should be a protection to him that slew another casually, so that he should not die for that as a crime which was not his voluntary act, but only his unhappiness. The appointment of these cities of refuge we had before, Exod. xxi. 13. and the law laid down concerning them at large, Numb. xxxv. 10, &c. It is here repeated and direction is given concerning three things. (1.) The appointing of three cities in Canaan for this purpose. Moses had already appointed three on that side Jordan, which he saw the conquest of, and now he bids them when they were settled on the other part of the country to appoint three more, ver. 1, 2, 3—7. The country was to be divided into three districts, as near as might be equal, and a city of refuge in the center of each, so that every corner of the land might have one within reach. Thus Christ is not a refuge at a distance which we must ascend to heaven, or go down to the deep for, but the word is nigh us, and Christ in the word, Rom. x. 8. The gospel brings salvation to our door, and there it knocks for admission. And to make the flight of the delinquent the more easy, the way must be prepared that led to the city of refuge. Probably they had causeways or streetways leading to those cities, and the Jews say, that the magistrates of Israel upon one certain day in the year, sent out messengers to see that those roads were in good repair, and they were to remove stumbling blocks, mend bridges that were broken, and where two ways met, they were to set up a

Mercurial post, with a finger to point the right way, on which was engraven in great letters, *Miklat; Miklat; refuge, refuge*. In allusion to this, gospel-ministers are to shew people the way to Christ, and to assist and direct them in flying by faith to him for refuge. They must be ready to remove their prejudices and help them over their difficulties. And blessed be God, the way of holiness to all that seek it faithfully is a high-way, so plain that *the wayfaring men though fools shall not err therein*.

(2.) The use to be made of these cities, *ver. 4, 5, 6.* (1.) It is supposed it might so happen, that a man might be the death of his neighbour without any design upon him, either from a sudden passion, or malice prepen-
se, but purely by accident, as by the flying off of an axe's head, which is the instance here given; with which every case of this kind was to be compared, and by it adjudged. See how human life lies exposed daily, and what deaths we are often in, and what need therefore we have to be always ready, our souls being continually in our hands. How are the sons of men *snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them?* (Eccles. ix. 12.) an evil time indeed it is, when this happens, not only to the slain, but to the slayer. (2.) It is supposed that the relations of the persons slain, would be forward to avenge the blood; in affection to their friend, and in zeal for public justice. Though the law did not allow the avenging of any other affront, or injury with death, yet the avenger of blood, the blood of a relation, shall have great allowances made for the heat of his heart, upon such a provocation as that, and his killing the manslayer though he was so by accident only, should not be accounted murder, if he did it before he got to the city of refuge, though it is owned he was not worthy of death. Thus would God possess people with a great horror and dread of the sin of murder; if mere chance-medley did thus expose a man, surely he that wilfully doth violence to the blood of any person, whether from an old grudge, or upon a sudden provocation, must flee to the pit, and let no man stay him, *Prov. xxviii. 17.* Yet the New Testament represents the sin of murder as more heinous and more dangerous than even this law doth, *1 John iii. 15. Ye know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.* (3.) It is provided that if an avenger of blood should be so unreasonable as to demand satisfaction for blood shed by accident only, then the city of refuge should protect the slayer. Sins of ignorance indeed do expose us to the wrath of God, but there is relief provided, if by faith and repentance we make use of it. Paul that had been a persecutor obtained mercy because he did it ignorantly: and Christ prayed for his crucifiers, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

(3.) The appointing of three cities more for this use, in case God should hereafter enlarge their territories, and the dominion of their religion; that all those places which came under the government of the law of Moses in other instances, might enjoy the benefit of that law in this instance, *ver. 8, 9, 10.* Here is, 1. An intimation of God's gracious intention to enlarge their coast, as he promised to their fathers, if they did not by their disobedience forfeit the promise, the condition of which is here carefully repeated, that if it were not performed the reproach might lie upon them, and not on God. He promised to give it, if thou shalt keep all these commandments; not otherwise. 2. A direction to them to appoint three cities more in their new conquests, which the number intimates should be as large as those their first conquests were, wherever the border of Israel went; this privilege must attend it, that innocent blood be not shed; *ver. 10.* Though God is the Saviour and preserver of all men, and has a tender regard to all lives, yet the blood of Israelites is in a particular manner precious to him, *Psal. lxxii. 14.* The learned Ainsworth observes, that the Jewish writers themselves own, that the condition not being performed, the promise of the enlarging of their coast was never fulfilled; so that there was no occasion of ever adding these three cities of refuge; yet the holy blessed God (say they) did not command it in vain, for in the days of Messiah the prince, three other cities shall be added to these six: they expect it to be fulfilled in the letter, but we know that in Christ it has its spiritual accomplishment, for the borders of the gospel Israel are enlarged, according to the promise, and in Christ, the Lord our righteousness, refuge is provided for those that by faith fly unto him.

2. It is provided that the cities of refuge should be no sanctuary or shelter to a wilful murderer, but even thence he should be fetched, and delivered to the avenger of blood, *ver. 11, 12, 13.* (1.) This shews that wilful murder must never be protected by the civil magistrate; he bears the sword of justice in vain if he suffers them to escape the edge of it that lie under the guilt of blood, which he by office is the avenger of. During the dominion of the papacy here in our own land, before the Reformation, there were some churches and religious houses (as they called them) that were made sanctuaries, for the protection of all sorts of criminals that fled to them; wilful murderers not excepted, so that (as Stamford saith, in his *Pleas of the Crown, lib. ii. cap. 38.*) the government follows not Moses but Romulus, and it was not till about the latter end of Henry the Eighth's time, that this privilege of sanctuary for wilful murder was taken away; when in that, as in other cases, the word of God came to be regarded more than the dictates of the see of Rome. And some have thought it would be a completing of that instance of reformation, if the benefit of clergy were taken away for man-slaughter, that is the killing of a man upon a small provocation, since this law allowed refuge only in case of that which our laws call chance-medley. (2.) It may be alluded to, to shew that in Jesus Christ there is no refuge for presumptuous sinners, that go on still in their trespasses. If we thus sin wilfully, sin and go on in it, there remains no sacrifice; *Heb. x. 26.* Those that flee to Christ from their sins, shall be safe in him, but not those that expect to be sheltered by him in their sins. Salvation itself cannot save such; divine justice will fetch such even from the city of refuge; the protection of which they are not entitled to.

14. ¶ Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's land-mark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit, in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it. 15. ¶ One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established. 16. ¶ If a false witness rise up against any man, to testify against him that which is wrong; 17. Then both the men between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days. 18. And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother: 19. Then shall ye do unto him as he had thought to have

done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. 20. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. 21. And thine eye shall not pity, but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Here is a statute for the preventing of frauds and perjuries; for the divine law takes care of men's rights and properties, and hath made a hedge about them. Such a friend is it to human society, and men's civil interest.

1. A law against frauds, *ver. 14.* (1.) Here is an implicit direction given to the first planters of Canaan, to fix land-marks, according to the distribution of the land to the several tribes and families by lot. Note, It is the will of God that every one should know his own; and that all good means should be used to prevent encroachments, and the doing and suffering of wrong. When right is settled care must be taken that it be not afterwards unsettled, and that, if possible, no occasion of dispute may arise. (2.) An express law to posterity not to remove those land-marks, which were thus fixed at first, by which a man secretly got that to himself which was his neighbour's. This, without doubt, is a moral precept, and still binding, and to us it forbids, (1.) The invading of any man's right, and taking to ourselves that which is not our own, by any fraudulent arts or practices, as by forging, concealing, destroying, or altering deeds and writings, which are our land-marks, to which appeals are made; or shifting hedges, meers, stone, and boundaries. Though the land-marks were set by the hand of man, yet he was a thief and robber by the law of God that removed them. Let every man be content with his own lot, and just to his neighbours, and then we shall have no land-marks removed. (2.) It forbids the sowing of discord among neighbours, and doing any thing to occasion strife and law-suits; which is done (and it is very ill done) by confounding those things which should determine disputes, and decide controversies. And, (3.) It forbids breaking in upon the settled order and constitution of civil government, and the altering of ancient usages without just cause. This law supports the honour of prescriptions. *Consuetudo facit jus.*

2. A law against perjuries, which enacts two things: 1. That a single witness should never be admitted to give evidence in a criminal cause, so as that sentence should be passed upon his testimony, *ver. 15.* This law we had before, *Numb. xxxv. 30.* and *Deut. xvii. 6.* This was enacted in favour to the prisoner, whose life and honour should not lie at the mercy of a particular person that had a pique against him: and for caution to the accuser, not to say that which he could not corroborate by the testimony of another. It is a just shame which this law put upon mankind, as false and not to be trusted, every man is by it suspected; and it is the honour of God's grace, that the record he has given concerning his Son is confirmed both in heaven and in earth by three witnesses, *1 John v. 7. Let God be true and every man a liar, Rom. iii. 4.*

2. That a false witness should incur the same punishment, which was to have been inflicted upon the person he accused, *ver. 16—21.* (1.) The criminal here is a false witness, who is said to rise up against a man, not only because all witnesses stood up when they gave in their evidence, but because a false witness did indeed rise up as an enemy and an assailant against him whom he accused. If two, or three, or many witnesses concurred in a false testimony, they were all liable to be prosecuted upon this law. (2.) The person wronged or brought into peril by a false testimony, is supposed to be the appellee, *ver. 17.* And yet if the person were put to death upon the evidence, and afterwards it appeared to be false, any other person, or the judges themselves *ex officio*, might call the false witness to account. (3.) Causes of this kind having more than ordinary difficulty in them were to be brought before the supreme court, The priests and judges who are said to be before the Lord, because as other judges sat in the gates of the cities so these sat at the gate of the sanctuary, *Deut. xvii. 12.* (4.) There must be great care in the trial, *ver. 18.* A diligent inquisition must be made into the characters of the persons, and all the circumstances of the case, which must be compared, that the truth might be found out; which where it is thus faithfully and impartially inquired into, providence it may be hoped, will particularly advance the discovery of. (5.) If it appeared that a man had knowingly and maliciously borne false witness against his neighbour, though the mischief he designed him thereby was not effected, he shall undergo the same penalty which his evidence would have brought his neighbour under, *ver. 19. Nec lex est justior ulla.* If the crime he accused his neighbour of was to be punished with death, the false witness must be put to death; if with stripes, he must be beaten; if with a pecuniary mulct, he was to be fined the same sum. And because to those who considered not the heinousness of the crime, and the necessity of making this provision against it, it might seem hard to punish a man so severely for a few words speaking, especially when no mischief did actually follow, it is added, *ver. 20. Thine eye shall not pity.* No man needs to be more merciful than God. The benefit that will accrue to the public by this severity will abundantly recompense it, *ver. 20. They that remain shall hear and fear.* Such exemplary punishments will be warnings to others not to attempt any such mischief, when they see how he that made the pit and digged it, is fallen into the ditch which he made.

CHAP. XX.

This chapter settles the militia, and establishes the laws and ordinances of war, 1. Relating to the soldiers. (1.) Those must be encouraged that were drawn up to the battle, *ver. 1—4.* (2.) Those must be dismissed and sent back again, whose private affairs called for their attendance at home, *ver. 5, 6, 7.* or whose weakness and timorousness dis fitted them for service in the field, *ver. 8, 9.* 2. Relating to the enemies they made war with, 1. The treaties they must make with the cities that were afar off, *ver. 10—15.* 2. The destruction they must make of the people into whose land they were going, *ver. 16, 17, 18.* 3. The care they must take in besieging cities not to destroy the fruit-trees, *ver. 19, 20.*

1. **W**HEN thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and least horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 2. And it shall be when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach, and speak unto the people, 3. And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle

battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them: 4. For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you. 5. ¶ And the officers shall speak unto the people saying, What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it. 6. And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it? let him also go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it. 7. And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in battle, and another man take her. 8. And the officers shall speak farther unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful, and faint-hearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart. 9. And it shall be when the officers have made an end of speaking unto the people, that they shall make captains of the armies to lead the people.

Israel was at this time to be considered rather as a camp, than as a kingdom, entering upon an enemy's country, and not yet settled in a country of their own; and besides the war they were now entering upon in order to their settlement, even after their settlement, they could neither protect nor enlarge their coast, but they must hear the alarms of war: it was therefore needful they should have direction given them in their military affairs; and in these verses they are directed in managing, marshalling and drawing up their own forces. And it is observable, that the discipline of war here prescribed, is so far from having any thing in it harsh or severe, as is usual in martial law, that the intent of the whole is on the contrary to encourage the soldiers, and to make their service easy to them.

1. They that were disposed to fight must be encouraged, and animated against their fears.

(1.) Moses here gives a general encouragement, which the leaders and commanders in the war must take to themselves, *ver. 1. Be not afraid of them*. Though the enemy had ever so much the advantage by their numbers, and more than thou, and by their cavalry, their armies being much made up of horses and chariots, which Israel were not allowed to multiply, yet decline not coming to a battle with them, dread not the issue, nor doubt of success. Two things they must encourage themselves with in their wars, provided they kept close to their God and their religion, otherwise they forfeited these engagements. (1.) The presence of God with them. *The Lord thy God is with thee*, and therefore thou art not in danger, nor needest thou be afraid. See *Isa. xl. 10.* (2.) The experience they and their fathers had had of God's power and goodness, in bringing them out of the land of Egypt, in defiance of Pharaoh and all his hosts, which was not only in general a proof of the divine omnipotence, but to them in particular a pledge of what God would do farther for them. He that saved them from those greater enemies, would not suffer them to be run down by those that were every way less considerable, and all he had done for them to be undone again.

(2.) This encouragement must be particularly addressed to the common soldiers by a priest appointed, and the Jews say, anointed for that purpose, whom they call the anointed of the war, a very proper title for our anointed Redeemer, the captain of our salvation. This priest, in God's name, was to animate the people; and who so fit to do that, as he whose office it was as priest to pray for them? for the best encouragements arise from the precious promises made to the prayer of faith. This priest must, (1.) Charge them not to be afraid, *ver. 3.* for nothing weakens the hands so much as that which makes the heart tremble, *ver. 3.* There is need of precept upon precept to this purpose; as that is here. *Let not your hearts be tender* (so the word is) to receive all the impressions of fear, but let a believing confidence in the power and promise of God harden them. *Fear not, and do not make haste*, (so the word is) for he that believeth doth not make more haste than good speed. Do not make haste, either rashly to anticipate your advantages, or basely to fly off upon every disadvantage. (2.) He must assure them of the presence of God with them to own and plead their righteous cause, and not only to save them from their enemies, but to give them victory over them, *ver. 4.* Note, Those have no reason to fear that have God with them. The giving of this encouragement by a priest, one of the Lord's ministers, intimates, (1.) That it is very fit that armies should have chaplains, not only to pray for them, but to preach to them, both to reprove that which would hinder their success, and to raise the hopes of it. (2.) That it is the work of Christ's ministers to encourage his good soldiers in their spiritual conflicts with the world and the flesh, and to assure them of a conquest, yea, more than a conquest, through Christ that loved us.

2. They that were indisposed to fight must be discharged; whether the indisposition did arise,

1. From the circumstances of a man's outward condition, as (1.) If he had lately built or purchased a new house, and had not taken possession of it, had not dedicated it, (*ver. 5.*) &c. made a solemn festival for the entertainment of his friends, that came to him to welcome him to his house; let him go home and take the comfort of that which God had blessed him with, till by enjoying it for some time he became less fond of it, and consequently less disturbed in the war by the thoughts of it, and more willing to die and leave it. For that is the nature of all our worldly enjoyments, that they please us best at first; after a while we see the vanity of them. Some think this dedication of their houses was a religious act, that they took possession of them with prayers and praises, with a solemn devoting of themselves and all their enjoyments to the service and honour of God; David penned the xxxth psalm on this occasion, as appears by the title. Note, He that has a house of his own, should dedicate it to God, by setting up and keeping up the fear and worship of God in it, that he may have a Church in his house; and nothing should be suffered to divert a man from this. Or, (2.) If a man had been at a great expence to plant a vineyard, and longed to eat of the fruit of it, which for the first three years he was forbidden to do, by that law, *Lev. xix. 29.* &c. let him go home, if he has a mind, and gratify his own humour with the fruits of it, *ver. 9.* See how indulgent God is to his people in innocent things, and how far from being a hard master. Since we naturally covet to eat the labour of our hands, rather than an Israelite should be crossed therein, his service in war should be dispensed with. Or, (3.) If a man were made up to be married, and the marriage was not so-

lemnized he was at liberty to return, *ver. 7.* as also to tarry at home for one year after marriage, *chap. xxiv. 5.* for the terrors of war would be disagreeable to a man in love. And God would not be served in his wars by pressed men that were forced into the army against their will, but they must all be perfectly volunteers, *Psal. cx. 3. Thy people shall be willing.* In running the Christian race, and fighting the good fight of faith, we must lay aside every weight, and all that which would clog and divert our minds, and make us unwilling. The Jewish writers agree, that this liberty to return was allowed only in those wars which they made voluntarily (as Bishop Patrick expressed it) not those which were made by the divine command against Amalek and the Canaanites, in which every man was bound to fight.

2. If a man's indisposition to fight arose from the weakness and timorousness of his own spirit, he had leave to return from the war, *ver. 8.* This proclamation Gideon made to his army, and it knocked off above two thirds of them, *Judges vii. 3.* Some make this fearfulness and faint-heartedness here supposed, to arise from the terrors of an evil conscience, which would make a man afraid to look death and danger in the face. It was then thought that men of loose and profligate lives would not be good soldiers, but must needs be both cowards in an army and curses to it, the shame and trouble of the camp; and therefore those who were conscious to themselves of notorious guilt, were shaken off. But it seems rather to be meant of a natural fearfulness. It was partly in kindness to them that they had their discharge, that though they were ashamed, yet they were eased; but much more in kindness to the rest of the army, who were not only hereby freed from the incumbrance of such as were useless and unserviceable, but the danger of infection from their cowardice and flight was prevented, that is the reason here given, *Lest his brethren's heart fail as well as his heart.* Fear is catching, and in an army is of most pernicious consequence. We must take heed that we fear not the fear of them that are afraid, *Isa. viii. 12.*

Lastly, It is here ordered, that when all the cowards were dismissed, then captains should be nominated, *ver. 9.* for it was in a special manner necessary that the leaders and commanders should be men of courage. That reform therefore must be made when the army was first mustered and marshalled. The soldiers of Christ have need of courage, that they may quit themselves like men, and endure hardness like good soldiers, especially the officers of his army.

10. ¶ When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. 11. And it shall be, and if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be that all the people that is found therein, shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. 12. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it. 13. And when the LORD thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword. 14. But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself: and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the LORD thy God hath given thee. 15. Thus shalt thou do unto all these cities which are very far off from thee, which are not the cities of these nations. 16. But of the cities of these people which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: 17. But thou shalt utterly destroy them, namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee: 18. That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods, so should ye sin against the LORD your God. 19. ¶ When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life) to employ them in the siege. 20. Only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down: and thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee, until it be subdued.

They are here directed what method to take in dealing with the cities, (those only are mentioned, *ver. 10.* but doubtless the armies in the field, and the nations they had occasion to deal with, are likewise intended) upon which they made war. They must not make a descent upon any of their neighbours, till they had first given them fair notice, by a public manifesto, or remonstrance of their quarrel with them. In dealing with the worst of enemies the laws of justice and honour must be observed; and as the sword must never be taken in hand without cause, so not without cause shewn. War is an appeal in which the merit of the cause must be set forth. 1. Even to the proclamation of war must be subjoined a tender of peace, if they would accept of it upon reasonable terms. That is, (say the Jewish writers) upon condition that they renounce idolatry, worship the God of Israel, as proselytes of the gate, that were not circumcised, and that they pay to their new masters a yearly tribute, and submit to their government: on these terms, the process of war should be stayed, and their conquerors upon this submission, were to be their protectors, *ver. 10, 11.* Some think, that even the seven nations of Canaan were to have this offer of peace made them, and the offer was no jest or mockery, though it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should not accept it, *Josh. xi. 20.* Others think that they are excluded, *ver. 16.* not only from the benefit of that law, *ver. 13.* which confines military execution to the males only; but from the benefit of this also, which allows not to make war till peace was refused. And I see not how they could proclaim peace to those who by the law were to be utterly rooted out, and to whom they were to show no mercy, *Deut. vii. 2.* But for any other nation which they made war upon, either for the enlarging of their coast, the avenging of any wrong done, or the recovery of any right denied; they must first proclaim peace to them. Let this shew (1.) God's grace in dealing with sinners: though he might most justly and easily

easily destroy them, yet having no pleasure in their ruin, he proclaims peace, and beseeches them to be reconciled; so that they, who lie most obnoxious to his justice, and ready to fall sacrifices to it, if they make him an answer of peace, and open to him upon condition they will be tributaries and servants to him, shall not only be saved from ruin, but incorporated with his Israel, as fellow citizens with the saints. (2.) Let it shew us our duty in dealing with our brethren: if any quarrel happen, let us not only be ready to hearken to the proposals of peace, but forward to make such proposals. We should never make use of the law till we have first tried to accommodate matters in variance amicably, and without expence and vexation. We must be for peace whoever are for war.

2. If the offers of peace were not accepted, then they must proceed to push on the war. And let those to whom God offers peace know, that if they reject the offer, and take not the benefit of it within the time limited, judgment will rejoice against mercy in the execution, as much as now mercy rejoiceth against judgment in the reprieve. In this case here, (1.) There is a promise implied, that they should be victorious. It is taken for granted ver. 13. that the Lord their God would deliver it into their hands. Note, Those enterprises which we undertake by a divine warrant, and prosecute by divine direction, we may expect to succeed in. If we take God's method we shall have his blessing. (2.) They are ordered, in honour to the public justice, to put all the soldiers to the sword, for them I understand by every male, ver. 13. all that bore arms (as all then did that were able.) But the spoil they are allowed to take to themselves, ver. 14. in which was accounted the women and children. Note, A justifiable property is acquired in that which is won in lawful war; God himself owns the title, the Lord thy God gives it thee, and therefore he must be owned in it, *Psal.* xlv. 3.

3. The nations of Canaan are excepted from the merciful provisions made by this law. Remnants might be left of the cities that were very far off, ver. 15. because by them they were not in so much danger of being infected with idolatry; nor was their country so directly and immediately intended in the promise. But of the cities which were given to Israel for an inheritance, no remnants must be left of their inhabitants, ver. 16. for it put a slight upon the promise to admit Canaanites to share with them in the peculiar land of promise. And for another reason they must be utterly destroyed, ver. 17. Because since it could not be expected they should be cured of their idolatry, if they were left with that plague sore upon them they would be in danger of infecting God's Israel, who were too apt to take the infection, ver. 18. They will teach you to do after their abominations, to introduce their customs into the worship of the God of Israel, and by degrees to forsake him and worship false gods; for those that dare violate the second commandment, will not long keep to the first. Strange worships open the door to strange deities.

Lastly, Care is here taken, that in the besieging of the cities there should not be any destruction made of fruit-trees, ver. 19, 20. In those times when besiegers forced their way, not as now with bombs and cannon-ball, but with battering rams; they had occasion for much timber in carrying on their sieges; now because in the heat of war, men are not apt to consider as they ought the public good, it is expressly provided the fruit-trees should not be used as timber-trees. That reason, for the tree of the field is man's, (the word life we supply) all the ancient versions, the Septuagint, Targums, &c. read, For is the tree of a field a man? Or, the tree of the field is not a man, that it should come against thee in the siege, or retire from thee into the bulwark. Do not brutishly vent thy rage against the trees that can do thee no harm. But our translation seems most agreeable to the intent of the law; and it teaches us, 1. That God is a better friend to man than he is to himself; and God's law which we are apt to complain of as a heavy yoke, consults our interest and comfort, while our own appetites and passions, which we are so indulgent of, are really enemies to our welfare. The intent of many of the divine precepts is to restrain us from destroying that which is our life and food. 2. That armies and their commanders are not allowed to make what desolation they please in the countries that are the seat of war. Military rage must always be checked and ruled with reason. War, though carried on with ever so much caution is destructive enough, and needs not be made more so than needs must. Generous spirits will shew themselves tender, not only of men's lives but of their livelihoods, for though the life is more than meat, yet it will soon be nothing without meat. 3. The Jews understand this as a prohibition of all wilful waste upon any account whatsoever. No fruit-tree is to be destroyed, unless it be barren and cumber the ground: Nay, they say who so wilfully breaks vessels, tears clothes, stops wells, pulls down buildings, or destroys meat, transgresses this law, Thou shalt not destroy. Christ took care that the broken meat should be taken up, that nothing might be lost. Every creature of God is good, and as nothing is to be refused, so nothing is to be abused. We may live to want what we carelessly waste.

C H A P. XXI.

In this chapter provision is made, 1. For the putting away of the guilt of blood from the land, when he that shed it was fled from justice, ver. 1—9. 2. For the preserving of the honour of a captive maid, ver. 12—14. 3. For the securing of the right of a first-born son, though he were not a favourite, ver. 15—17. 4. For the restraining and punishing of a rebellious son, ver. 18—21. 5. For the maintaining of the honour of human bodies, which must not be hanged in chains, but decently buried, even the bodies of the worst malefactors, ver. 22, 23.

1. **I**F one be found slain in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him: 2. Then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which are round about him that is slain: 3. And it shall be that the city which is next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take an heifer which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke. 4. And the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which is neither eared nor sown, and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley. 5. And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near (for them the LORD thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless the name of the LORD) and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried. 6. And all the elders of that city that are next unto the slain man, shall

wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley. 7. And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. 8. Be merciful, O LORD, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them. 9. So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD.

Care had been taken by some preceding laws for the vigorous and effectual prosecution of a wilful murderer, chap. xix. 11. the putting of whom to death was the putting away of the guilt of blood from the land: but if that could not be done, the murderer not being discovered, they must not think the land was in no danger of contracting any pollution, since it was not through any neglect of theirs that the murderer was unpunished; no, a great solemnity is here provided for the putting away of the guilt, as an expression of their dread and detestation of that sin.

1. The case supposed is, that one is found slain, and it is not known who slew him, ver. 1. The providence of God hath sometimes wonderfully brought to light the hidden works of darkness, and by strange occurrences the sin of the guilty has found them out: inasmuch that it is become a proverb, murder will out; but it is not always so; now and then the devil's promises of secrecy and impunity in this world are made good; yet it is but for a while: there is a time coming when secret murders will be discovered; the earth shall disclose her blood, *Ila.* xxvi. 21. upon the inquisition justice makes for it; and an eternity coming, when they that escaped punishment from men, will lie under the righteous judgment of God. And the going of so many murders and other wickednesses unpunished in this world, makes it necessary that there should be a day of judgment, to require that which is past, *Ecc.* iii. 15.

2. Directions are given what is to be done in this case: 1. It is taken for granted, that a diligent search had been made for the murderer, witnesses examined, and circumstances strictly enquired into, that if possible they might find out the guilty person; but if after all, they could not trace it out; nor fasten the charge upon any, then, 1. The elders of the next city (that had a court of three and twenty in it) were to concern themselves about this matter. If it were doubtful which city was next the great Sanhedrim were to send commissioners to determine that matter, by an exact measure, ver. 2, 3. Note, Public persons must be solicitous about the public good; and those that are in power and reputation in cities, must lay out themselves to redress grievances, and reform what is amiss in the country and neighbourhood that lies about them. Those that are next to them should have the largest share of their good influence, as ministers of God for good.

2. The priests and Levites must assist, and preside in this solemnity, ver. 5. that they might direct the management of it in all points according to the law, and particularly might be the people's mouth to God in the prayer that was to be put up on this sad occasion, ver. 8. God being Israel's king, his ministers must be their magistrates; and by their word, as the mouth of the court, and learned in the laws, every controversy must be tried. It was their privilege that they had such guides, overseers, and rulers, and their duty to make use of them upon all occasions, especially in sacred things, as this was.

3. They were to bring a heifer down into a rough and unoccupied valley, and to kill it there, ver. 3, 4. This was not a sacrifice, for it was not brought to the altar, but a solemn protestation, that thus they would put the murderer to death if they had him in their hands. The heifer must be one that had not drawn in the yoke, to signify (say some) that the murderer was a son of Belial; it must be done in a rough valley to signify the horror of the fact, and that the defilement which blood brings upon a land turns it into barrenness. And the Jews say, that unless after this the murderer was found out, this valley where the heifer was killed was never to be tilled or sown.

4. The elders were to wash their hands in water over the heifer that was killed, and to profess, not only that they had not shed this innocent blood themselves, but that they knew not who had, (ver. 6, 7.) nor had knowingly concealed the murderer, helped him to make his escape, or had been any way aiding or abetting. To this custom David alludes, *Psal.* xxvi. 6. I will wash my hands in innocency; but if Pilot had an eye to it, *Matth.* xxvii. 24. be wretchedly misapplied it, when he condemned Christ, knowing him to be innocent, and yet acquitted himself from the guilt of innocent blood. *Protestatio non valet contra factum.*

5. The priests were to pray to God for the country and nation, that God would be merciful to them, and not bring upon them the judgments which the connivance at the sin of murder would deserve, ver. 8. it might be presumed, that the murderer was either one of their city, or was now harboured in their city, and therefore must pray that they might not fare the worse for his being among them. *Numb.* xvi. 22. Be merciful, O Lord, to thy people Israel. Note, When we hear of the wickedness of the wicked, we have need to cry earnestly to God for mercy for our land, which groans and trembles under it. We must empty the measure by our prayers, which others are filling by their sins.

Now this solemnity was appointed, (1.) That it might give occasion to common and public discourse concerning the murder, which perhaps might some way or other occasion the discovery of it. (2.) That it might possess people with a dread of the guilt of blood. Not only how defiling it is to the conscience of him that sheds it, (which should engage us all to pray with David, deliver me from bloodguiltiness) but to the land in which it is shed. It cries to the magistrates for justice on the criminal, and if that cry be not heard, it cries to heaven for judgment on the land. If there must be so much ado to save the land from guilt when the murderer was not known, it was certainly impossible to secure it from guilt, if the murderer was known and yet protected. All would be taught by this solemnity, to use their utmost care and diligence to prevent, discover, and punish murder. Even the heathen mariners dreaded the guilt of blood, *Jonah* i. 14. (3.) That we might all learn to take heed in partaking in other men's sins, and making ourselves accessory to them *ex post facto*, by countenancing the sin or sinner, and not witnessing against it in our places. We have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, if we do not reprove them rather, and bear our testimony against them; the repentance of the Church of Corinth for the sin of one of their members, produced such a carelessness, such a clearing of themselves, such a holy indignation, tear and revenge, (2 *Cor.* vii. 11.) as was signified by the solemnity here appointed.

10. ¶ When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the LORD thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive,

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11. And seekest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife: 12. Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house, and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails. 13. And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife. 14. And it shall be if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will, but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandize of her, because thou hast humbled her.

By this law a soldier is allowed to marry his captive, if he pleased. For the hardness of their hearts Moses gave them this permission, lest if they had not liberty given them to marry such, they should have taken liberty to defile themselves with them, and by such wickedness the camp would have been troubled. The man is supposed to have a wife already, and to take this wife for a secondary wife, as the Jews called them. This indulgence of men's inordinate desires, in which their hearts walked after their eyes, is by no means agreeable to the law of Christ, which therefore in this respect, among others, far exceeds in glory the law of Moses. The gospel permits not him that hath one wife to take another, for from the beginning it was not so: the gospel forbids looking upon a woman, though a beautiful one, to lust after her, and commands the mortifying and denying of all irregular desires, though it be as uneasy as the cutting off a right hand; so much doth our holy religion, more than that of the Jews, advance the honour and support the dominion of the soul over the body, the spirit over the flesh, consonant to the glorious discovery it makes of life and immortality, and the better hope.

But though military men are allowed this liberty, yet care is here taken that they should not abuse it, that is,

1. That they should not abuse themselves by doing it too hastily, though the captive was never so desirable. *If thou wouldest have her to thy wife*, ver. 10, 11. it is true, thou needest not ask her parents consent, for she is thy captive, and is at thy dispose. But, 1. Thou shalt not lie with her, till thou hast married her. This allowance was not designed to gratify a filthy brutish lust, in the heat and fury of its rebellion against reason and virtue; but an honourable and generous affection to a comely and amiable person, though in distress; therefore he may make her his wife if he will, but he must not deal with her as with a harlot. 2. Thou shalt not marry her of a sudden, but keep her a full month in thy house, ver. 12, 13. This he must do either, (1.) That he may try to take his affections off from her: for he must know, that though in marrying her he doth not do ill, (so the law then stood) yet in letting her alone he doth much better. Let her therefore shave her head, that he might not be enamoured with her locks, and let her nails grow (so the margin reads it) to spoil the beauty of her hand. Note, We should contrive ways to take our affections off from those things we are tempted to love inordinately, *quicquid amas, cupias non pluisse nimis*. Or rather, (2.) This was done in token of her renouncing idolatry, and becoming a proselyte to the Jewish religion. The shaving of her head, and the paring of her nails, and the changing of her apparel, signified her putting off her former conversation, which was corrupt in her ignorance, that she might become a new creature. She must remain in his house, to be taught the good knowledge of the Lord, and the worship of him, which (say the Jews) if she received not, but continued obstinate in idolatry, he must not marry her. Note, The professors of religion must not be unequally yoked with unbelievers, 2 Cor. vi. 14.

2. It is likewise provided that they should not abuse the poor captive. 1. She must have time to bewail her father and mother, from whom she separated, and without whose consent and blessing she is now likely to be married, and perhaps to a common soldier of Israel, though in her country never so nobly born and bred. To force a marriage till these sorrows were digested, and in some measure got over, and she was better reconciled to the land of her captivity, by being better acquainted with it, would be very unkind. She must not bewail her idols, but be glad to part with them; to her near and dear relations only her affection must be thus indulged. 2. If, upon second thoughts, he that had brought her to his house with a purpose to marry her, changed his mind and would not marry her, he might not make merchandize of her, as of his other prisoners, but must give her liberty to return, if she pleased to her own country, because he had humbled her, and afflicted her, by raising expectations, and then disappointing them, ver. 14. having made a fool of her, he might not make a prey of her. This intimates how binding the laws of justice and honour are, particularly in the pretensions of love, the courting of affections, and the promises of marriage, which are to be looked upon as solemn things that have something sacred in them, and therefore are not to be jested with.

15. ¶ If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have borne him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the first-born son be hers that was hated: 16. Then it shall be when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved first-born, before the son of the hated, which is indeed the first-born: 17. But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the first-born, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength, the right of the first-born is his.

This law restrains men from disinheriting their eldest sons, purely in a humour and without just provocation.

1. The case here put, ver. 15, is very instructive. (1.) It shews the great mischief of having more wives than one, which the law of Moses did not restrain, probably in hopes that men's own experience of the great inconvenience of it in families, would at last put an end to it, and make them a law to themselves. Observe the supposition here, if a man have two wives, it is a thousand to one but one of them is beloved and the other hated, i. e. manifestly loved less, as Leah was by Jacob, and the effect of this cannot but be strifes and jealousies, envy, and confusion, and every evil work, which could not but create a constant uneasiness and vexation to the husband, and involve him both in sin and trouble. Those do much better consult their own present ease and satisfaction, who adhere to God's law, than those who indulge their own lusts. (2.) It shews how providence com-

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monly sides with the weakest, and gives more abundant honour to that part which lacked, for the first-born son is here supposed to be hers that was hated, it was so in Jacob's family, because the Lord saw that Leah was hated, Gen. xxix. 31. The great householder wisely gives to each his dividend of comfort; if one had the honour to be the beloved wife, it often proved that the other had the honour to be the mother of the first-born.

2. The law in this case is still binding to parents, they must give their children their right and without partiality. In the case supposed, the eldest son, though the son of the less beloved wife, must have his birth-right privilege, which was a double portion of his estate, because he was the beginning of his strength, i. e. in him his family began to be strengthened, and his quiver began to be filled with the arrows of a mighty man, Psal. cxxvii. 4. and therefore the right of the first-born is his, ver. 16, 17. Jacob had indeed deprived Reuben of his birth-right, and given it to Joseph, but it was because Reuben had forfeited the birth-right by his incest, not because he was the son of the hated, now lest that which Jacob did justly should be drawn into a precedent, for others to do the same thing unjustly, it is here provided that when the father makes his will, or otherwise settles his estate, the child shall not fare the worse for the mother's unhappiness, in having less of her husband's love, for that was not the child's fault. Note, 1. Parents ought to make no other difference in dispensing their affections among their children, than what they see plainly God makes in dispensing his grace among them. 2. Since it is the providence of God that makes heirs, the disposal of providence in that matter must be acquiesced in, and not opposed. No son should be abandoned by his father, till he manifestly appear to be abandoned of God, which is hard to say of any while there is life.

18. ¶ If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: 19. Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place: 20. And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. 21. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear. 22. ¶ And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: 23. His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day (for he that is hanged is accursed of God) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

Here is, 1. A law for the punishing of a rebellious son. Having in the former law provided, that parents should not deprive their children of their right, it was fit it should next be provided, that children withdraw not the honour and duty that is owing to their parents, for there is no partiality in the divine law.

1. Observe, how the criminal is here described. He is a *stubborn and rebellious son*, ver. 18. No child was to fare the worse for the weakness of his capacity, the slowness or dulness of his understanding, but for his wilfulness and obstinacy. If he carry himself proudly and insolently towards his parents, condemn their authority, slight their reproofs and admonitions, disobey the express command they give him for his own good, hate to be reformed by the correction they give him, shame their family, grieve their hearts, waste their substance, and threaten to ruin their estate by riotous living, this is a *stubborn and rebellious son*. He is particularly supposed, ver. 20, to be a *glutton or a drunkard*. This intimates either, (1.) That these were sins which his parents did in a particular manner warn him against, and therefore in these instances there was a plain evidence that he did not obey their voice. Lemuel had his charge from his mother, Prov. xxxi. 4. Note, in the education of children great care should be taken both to suppress all inclinations of drunkenness, and to keep them out of the way of temptations to it; in order hereunto they should be possessed betimes with a dread and detestation of that beastly sin, and taught betimes to deny themselves. Or, (2.) That his being a *glutton and a drunkard*, was the cause of his insolence and obstinacy towards his parents. Note, There is nothing that draws men into all manner of wickedness, and hardens them in it, more certainly and fatally, than drunkenness doth. When men take to drink, they forget the law, they forget all law, (Prov. xxxi. 5.) even that fundamental law of honouring parents.

2. How this criminal is to be proceeded against. His own father and mother are to be his prosecutors, ver. 19, 20. They might not put him to death themselves, but they must complain of him to the elders of the city, and the complaint must needs be made with a sad heart, *this our son is stubborn and rebellious*. Note, Those that give up themselves to vice and wickedness, and will not be reclaimed, forfeit their interest in the natural affections of their nearest relations; the instruments of their Being justly become the instruments of their destruction. The children that forget their duty must thank themselves, and not blame their parents, if they forget their love. And how difficult soever tender parents now find it to reconcile themselves to the just punishment of their rebellious children, in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, all natural affection will be so entirely swallowed up in divine love, that they will be very well content to see them damned, because God will be therein for ever glorified.

2. What judgment is to be executed upon him; he must be publicly stoned to death by the men of his city, ver. 21. And thus, (1.) The paternal authority was supported, and God, our common father, shewed himself jealous for it, it being one of the first and most ancient streams derived from him that is the fountain of all power. (2.) The law, if duly executed, would early destroy the wicked of the land, Psal. ci. 8. and prevent the spreading of the gangrene by cutting off the corrupt part betimes; for those that were ill members of families, would never make good members of the commonwealth. (3.) It would strike an awe upon children, and frighten them into obedience to their parents, if they would not otherwise be brought to their duty, and kept in it. All Israel shall hear. The Jews say, the elders that condemned him were to send notice of it in writing all the nations over, *in such a court, such a day, we stoned such a one, because he was a stubborn and rebellious son*. And I have sometimes wished, that as in all our courts there is an exact record kept of the condemnation of criminals in *perpetuam rei memoriam*; so there might be public and authentic notice given in print to the kingdom, of such condemnations, and the executions upon them, by the elders themselves, *in terrorem*, that all may hear and fear.

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2. A law for the burying of the bodies of malefactors that were hanged, *ver. 22.* The hanging of them by the neck till the body was dead was not used at all among the Jews, as with us, but such as were stoned to death, if it were for blasphemy, or some other very execrable crime, it was usual, by order of the judges, to hang up the dead body upon a post, for some time, as a spectacle to the world, to express the ignominy of the crime, and to strike the greater terror upon others, that they might not only hear and fear, but see and fear. Now it is here provided that whatever time of the day, they were thus hung up, at sun-set they should be taken down and buried, and not left to hang out all night: sufficient (saith the law) *to such a man is this punishment*; hitherto let it go, but no farther. Let the malefactor and his crime be hid in the grave.

Now, 1. God would thus preserve the honour of human bodies, and the tenderness towards the worst of criminals. The time of exposing dead bodies thus is limited, for the same reason that the number of stripes was limited by another law, *lest thy brother seem vile unto thee.* Punishing beyond death God reserves to himself, as for man there is no more that he can do. Whether therefore the hanging of malefactors in chains, and setting up their heads and quarters be decent among Christians that look for the resurrection of the body, may perhaps be worth considering. 2. Yet it is plain there is something ceremonial in it; by the law of Moses, the touch of a dead body was defiling, and therefore dead bodies must not be left hanging up in the country, because by the same rule that would defile land. But, 3. There is one reason here given which has reference to Christ, *he that is hanged is accursed of God*, i. e. it is the highest degree of disgrace and reproach that can be done to a man, and proclaims him under the curse of God as much as any external punishment can. They that see him thus hang between heaven and earth will conclude him abandoned of both, and unworthy of either, and therefore let him not hang all night, for that will carry it too far. Now the apostle shewing how Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being himself made a curse for us, illustrates it by comparing this brand here put on him that was hanged on a tree with the death of Christ, *Gal. iii. 13.* Moses in spirit uses this phrase of being *accursed of God*, when he means no more than being treated most ignominiously, that it might afterwards be applied to the death of Christ, and might shew that in it he underwent the curse of the law for us, which is a great enhancement of his love, and a great encouragement to our faith in him. And (as the excellent Bishop Patrick well observes) this passage is applied to the death of Christ, not only because he bare our sins and was exposed to shame, as these malefactors were that were accursed of God, but that he was in the evening taken down from the cursed tree and buried, (and that by the particular care of the Jews with an eye to this law, *John xix. 31.*) in token that now the guilt was removed the law was satisfied, as it was when the malefactor had hanged till sun-set; it demanded no more. Then he ceased to be a curse, and those that are his. And as the land of Israel was pure and clean, when the dead body was buried, so the Church is washed and cleansed by the complete satisfaction which thus Christ made.

C H A P. XXII.

The laws of this chapter do provide, 1. For the preservation of charity and good neighbourship, in the care of stray or fallen cattle, ver. 1—4. 2. For the preservation of order and distinction; that men and women should not wear one another's clothes, ver. 5. and that other needless mixtures should be avoided, ver. 9—11. 3. For the preservation of birds, ver. 6, 7. 4. Of life, ver. 8. 5. Of the commandments, ver. 12. 6. Of the reputation of a wife abused, if she were innocent, ver. 13—19. but for her punishment if guilty, ver. 20, 21. 7. For the preservation of the chastity of wives, ver. 22. Virgins betrothed, 23—27. or not betrothed, ver. 28, 29. And lastly against incest, ver. 30.

1. **T**HOU shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother. 2. And if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again. 3. In like manner shalt thou do with his ass, and so shalt thou do with his raiment, and with all lost things of thy brother's, which he hath lost and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise; thou mayest not hide thyself. 4. ¶ Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again.

The kindness that was commanded to be shewn in reference to an enemy, *Exod. xxiii. 4, &c.* is here required to be much more done for a neighbour, though he was not an Israelite, for the law is consonant to natural equity.

1. That stray cattle should be brought back either to the owner or to the pasture out of which they had gone astray, *ver. 1, 2.* This must be done in pity to the very cattle, which while they wandered were exposed; and in civility and respect to the owner, nay, and in justice to him, for it was doing as he would be done by, which is one of the fundamental laws of equity. Note, Religion teaches us to be neighbourly, and to be ready to do all good offices, as we have opportunity, to all men. In doing this, 1. They must not stick at pains, but if they knew who the owner was, must bring it back themselves, but if they should only send notice to the owner to come and look after it himself, some mischief might befall it ere he could reach it. 2. They must not stick at charge: but if they knew not who the owner was, must take it home and feed it till the owner was found. If such care must be taken of a neighbour's ox or ass going astray, much more of himself if he go astray from God and his duty, we should do our utmost to convert him, *Jan. v. 19.* and restore him, considering ourselves, *Gal. xi. 1.*

2. That lost goods shall be brought to the owner, *ver. 3.* The Jews say he that found the lost goods was to give public notice of them by the common crier three or four times according to the usage with us; if the owner could not be found, he that found the goods might convert them to his own use, but (say some learned writers in this case) he would do very well to give the value of the goods to the poor.

3. That cattle in distress should be helped; *ver. 4.* This must be done both in compassion to the brute creatures, for a merciful man regardeth the life

of a beast, though it be not his own, and in love and friendship to our neighbour, not knowing how soon we may have occasion for his help. If one member may say to another, I have at present no need of thee, it cannot say, I never shall.

5. ¶ The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God. 6. ¶ If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young. 7. But thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days. 8. ¶ When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence. 9. ¶ Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard be defiled. 10. ¶ Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together. 11. ¶ Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together. 12. ¶ Thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of thy vesture, wherewith thou coverest thyself.

Here are several laws in these verses which seem to stoop very low, and to take cognizance of things mean and minute; men's laws commonly do not so; *de minimis non curat lex*; but because God's providence extendeth itself to the smallest affairs, his precepts do so, that even in them we may be in fear of the Lord, as we are under his eye and care. And yet the significancy and tendency of these statutes which seem little, is such, as that notwithstanding them the things of God's law, which he has written to us, are to be accounted great things.

1. The distinction of sexes by the apparel is to be kept up, for the preservation of our own and our neighbour's chastity, *ver. 5.* Nature itself teaches that a difference be made between them in their hair, *1 Cor. xi. 14.* and by the same rule, in their clothes, which therefore ought not to be confounded either in ordinary wear or upon occasion. To befriend a lawful escape or concealment it may be done; but whether for sport, or in the acting of plays, is justly questionable. (1.) Some think it refers to the idolatrous customs of the Gentiles: in the worship of Venus women appeared in armour, and men in women's clothes; this, as other such superstitious usages is here said to be an abomination to the Lord. (2.) It forbids the confounding of the dispositions and affairs of the sexes: men must not be effeminate, nor do the women's work in the house; nor must women be viragos, pretend to teach or usurp authority, *1 Tim. ii. 11, 12.* (3.) Probably this confounding of garments had been used to gain opportunity of committing uncleanness, and is therefore forbidden; for those that would be kept from sin must keep themselves from all occasions of it and approaches to it.

2. In taking a bird's nest, the dam must be let go, *ver. 6, 7.* The Jews say, this is the least of all the commandments of the law of Moses, and yet the same promise is here made to the observance of it, that is made to the keeping of the fifth commandment, which is one of the greatest, *that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days*: for as disobedience in a small matter, shews a very great contempt of the law; so obedience in a small matter shews a very great regard to it. He that let go a bird out of his hand (which was worth two in the bush) purely because God bid him; in that made it to appear, that he esteemed all God's precepts concerning all things to be right, and that he could deny himself rather than sin against God. But doth God take care for birds? *1 Cor. ix. 9.* Yes, certainly? and perhaps to this law our Saviour alludes, *Luke xii. 6.* Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? This law, (1.) Forbids us to be cruel to the brute creatures, or to take a pleasure in destroying them. Though God has made us wiser than the fowls of heaven, and given us dominion over them, yet we must not abuse them, nor rule them with rigour. Let go the dam to breed again; destroy it not, for blessing is in it, *Isa. lxv. 8.* (2.) It teaches us compassion to those of our own kind, and to abhor the thought of every thing that looks barbarous and cruel, and ill-natured, especially towards those of the weaker and tenderer sex, which always ought to be treated with the utmost respect, in consideration of the sorrows wherein they bring forth children. It is spoken of as an instance of the most inhuman cruelty, that the mother was dashed to pieces upon her children, *Hos. x. 14.* and that the women with child were ripped up, *Amos i. 13.* (3.) It farther intimates that we must not take advantage against any, from their natural affection, and the tenderness of their disposition, to do them an injury. The dam could not have been taken, if her concern for her eggs or young (unlike to the ostrich) had not detained her upon the nest, when otherwise she could easily have secured herself by flight. Now, since it is a thousand pities she should share the worse for that which is her praise, the law takes care that she shall be let go. The remembrance of this may perhaps some time or other keep us from doing a hard or unkind thing to those we have at our mercy.

3. In building a house, care must be taken to make it safe, that none might receive mischief by falling from it, *ver. 8.* The roofs of their houses were flat for people to walk on, as appears by many scriptures; now lest any through carelessness, should fall off them, they must compass them with battlements, which (the Jews say) must be three feet and a half high; if this were not done, and mischief followed; the owner, by his neglect, brought the guilt of blood upon his house. See here, (1.) How precious men's lives are to God, who protects them not only by his providence, but by his law. (2.) How precious therefore they ought to be to us, and what care we should take to prevent hurt from coming to any person. The Jews say, that by the equity of this law, they were obliged (and so are we too) to fence, or remove every thing by which life may be endangered, as to cover draw wells, keep bridges in repair, and the like; lest if any perished through our omission their blood be required at our hand.

4. Odd mixtures are here forbidden, *ver. 9, 10.* much of this we met with before, *Lev. xix. 19.* There appears not any thing at all of moral evil in these things, and therefore we now make no conscience of sowing wheat and rye together, plowing with horses and oxen together, and of wearing linsley-woollen garments; but hereby is forbidden either, (1.) A conformity to some idolatrous customs of the heathen. Or, (2.) That which

which is contrary to the plainness and purity of an Israelite. They must not gratify their own vanity and curiosity by putting those things together, which the Creator in infinite wisdom had made asunder: They must not be unequally yoked with unbelievers; nor mingle themselves with the unclean, as an ox with an ass: Nor must their profession and appearance in the world be motley, or party-coloured, but all of a piece, all of a kind.

5. The law concerning fringes upon their garments, and memorandums of the commandments, which we had before, *Numb. xv. 38, 39.* is here repeated, *ver. 12.* By these they were distinguished from other people, so that it might be said upon the first sight, there goes an Israelite; which taught them not to be ashamed of their country, or the peculiarities of their religion, how much soever their neighbours looked upon them and it with contempt; and they were also put in mind of the precepts, upon the particular occasions to which they had reference; and perhaps this law is repeated here, because the precepts immediately foregoing seemed so minute, that they were in danger of being overlooked and forgotten. The fringes will mind you not to make your garments of linen and woollen, *ver. 11.*

13. ¶ If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her, 14. And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid: 15. Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity, unto the elders of the city in the gate. 16. And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her, 17. And lo, he hath given occasions of speech against her, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid: and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity: and they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. 18. And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastize him. 19. And they shall amerce him in an hundred *shekels* of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife, he may not put her away all his days. 20. But if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel: 21. Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put away evil from among you. 22. ¶ If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel. 23. ¶ If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband; and a man find her in the city, and lie with her: 24. Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city: and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbours wife, so thou shalt put away evil from among you. 25. ¶ But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die. 26. But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing, there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so is this matter. 27. For he found her in the field, and the betrothed damsel cried, and there was none to save her. 28. If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found: 29. Then the man that lay with her, shall give unto the damsel's father fifty *shekels* of silver, and she shall be his wife, because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days. 30. ¶ A man shall not take his father's wife, nor discover his father's skirt.

These laws relate to the seventh commandment, laying a restraint, by laying a penalty, upon those fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

1. If a man lusting after another woman, to get rid of his wife, slander her, and falsely accuse her, as not having the virginity she pretended to when he married her, upon the disproof of the slander he must be punished, *ver. 13—19.* What the meaning of that evidence is, by which the husband's accusation was to be proved false, the learned are not agreed, nor is it at all necessary to enquire, they for whom this law was intended no doubt understood it; it is sufficient for us to know, that this wicked husband, who had thus endeavoured to ruin the reputation of his own wife, was to be scourged and fined, and bound out from ever divorcing the wife he had thus abused, *ver. 18, 19.* Upon his dislike of her, he might have divorced her if he had pleased by the permission of the law, *chap. xxiv. 1.* But then he must have given her her dowry; if therefore to save that, and to do her the greater mischief, he would thus put her into an ill name, it was fit he should be severely punished for it, and for ever after lose the benefit of the permission of divorce. Observe, (1.) The nearer any are in relation to us, the greater sin it is to bely them, and blemish their reputation. It is spoken of as a crime of the highest nature to slander their own mother's son, (*Psal. l. 20.*) who is next to thyself, much more to slander thine own wife, or thine own husband, that is thyself. It is an ill bird indeed that defiles its own nest. (2.) Chastity is honour as well as virtue, and that which gives occasion for the suspicion of it as a great reproach and disgrace as any other whatsoever: in this matter therefore, above any thing, we should be highly tender both of our own good name and others. (3.) Parents must look upon themselves

as concerned to vindicate the reputation of their children, for it is a branch of their own.

2. If a woman that was married as a virgin were not found so, she was to be stoned to death at her father's door, *ver. 20, 21.* If the uncleanness was committed before she was betrothed, it would have been punished as a capital crime; but she must die for the abuse she put upon him whom she married, being conscious to herself of her being defiled, while she made him believe her to be a chaste and modest woman. But some think her uncleanness was punished with death, only in case it was committed after she was betrothed, supposing there were few come to maturity but what were betrothed, though not yet married. Now, (1.) This gave a mighty powerful caution to young women to flee fornication, since, however concealed before, so as not to mar their marriage, it would very likely be discovered after, to their perpetual infamy and utter ruin. (2.) It is intimated to parents, that they must by all means possible preserve their children's chastity, by giving them good advice and admonition, setting them good examples, keeping them from ill company, praying for them, and laying them under needful restraints; because, if the children committed lewdness, the parents must have the grief and shame of the execution at their own door. That phrase of *folly wrought in Israel*, was used concerning this very crime in the case of Dinah, *Gen. xxxiv. 7.* All sin is folly, uncleanness especially; but above all, uncleanness in Israel, by profession a holy people.

3. If any man, single or married, lay with a married woman, they were both to be put to death, *ver. 22.* This law we had before, *Lev. xx. 10.* For a married man to lie with a single woman, was not a crime of so high a nature, nor was it punished with death, because not introducing a spurious brood into families, under the character of legitimate children.

4. If a damsel were betrothed and not married, she was from under the eye of her intended husband, and therefore she and her chastity were taken under the special protection of the law. (1.) If her chastity were violated by her own consent, she was to be put to death, and her adulterer with her, *ver. 23, 24.* And it shall be presumed she consented, if it were done in the city; or in any place where, had she cried out, help might speedily have come in to prevent the injury offered her. *Qui tacet consentire videtur.* Note, It may be presumed, that those willingly yield to a temptation, (whatever they pretend) who will not use the means and helps they might be furnished with to avoid and overcome it. Nay, her being found in the city, a place of company and diversion, when she should have kept under the protection of her father's house, was an evidence against her, that she had not that dread of the sin, and the danger of it, which became a modest woman. Note, They that needlessly expose themselves to temptation, justly suffer for the same, if ere they are aware they be surprized and caught by it. Dinah lost her honour to gratify her curiosity with a sight of the daughters of the land. By this law the virgin Mary was in danger of being made a public example, that is, of being stoned to death, but that God by an angel, cleared the matter to Joseph. (2.) If she were forced, and never consented, he that committed the rape, was to be put to death, but the damsel was to be acquitted, *ver. 25, 26, 27.* Now if it were done in the field, out of the hearing of neighbours, it shall be presumed that she cried out, but there was none to save her: and besides her going into the field, a place of solitude, did not so much expose her. Now by this law it is intimated to us, 1. That we shall suffer only for the wickedness we do, not for that which is done unto us. That is no sin which has not more or less of the will in it. 2. That we must presume the best concerning all persons unless the contrary do appear, not only charity but equity teaches us to do so. Though none heard her cry, yet because none could hear it if she did, it shall be taken for granted that she did. This rule we should go by in judging of persons and actions, believe all things, and hope all things. 3. That our chastity should be as dear to us as our life; when that is assaulted it is not at all improper to cry murder, murder, for as when a man riseth against his neighbour and slayeth him, even so is this matter. By way of allusion to this, see what we are to do when Satan sets upon us with his temptations, wherever we are let us cry aloud to heaven for help, (*Jucurre Domine rim patior*) and there we may be sure to be heard, and answered, as Paul was, *My grace is sufficient for thee.*

5. If a damsel not betrothed be thus abused by violence, he that abused her should be fined, the father should have the fine, and if he and the damsel did consent, he should be bound to marry her, and never to divorce her, how much soever she was below him, and how displeasing soever she might afterwards be to him, as Tamar was to Amnon, after he had forced her, *ver. 28, 29.* This was to deter men from such vicious practices, which it is a shame that we are necessitated to read and write of.

6. The law against a man's marrying his father's widow, or having any undue familiarity with his father's wife, is here repeated, *ver. 30.* from *Lev. xviii. 8.* And probably it is intended (as Bishop Patrick notes) for a short memorandum to them carefully to observe all the law there made against incestuous marriages, this being instanced in which is the most detestable of all; it is that of which the apostle saith, *It is not so much as named among the Gentiles,* 1 Cor. v. i. 1.

C H A P. XXIII.

The laws of this chapter do provide, 1. For the preserving of the purity and honour of the families of Israel, by excluding such as would be a disgrace to them, *ver. 1—8.* 2. For the preserving of the purity and honour of the camp of Israel when it was abroad, *ver. 9—14.* 3. For the encouraging and entertaining of deserters, *ver. 15, 16.* 4. Against whoredom, *ver. 17, 18.* 5. Against usury, *ver. 19, 20.* 6. Against the breach of vows, *ver. 21—23.* 7. What liberty a man might take in his neighbour's field and vineyard, and what not, *ver. 24, 25.*

1. **H**E that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD. 2. A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD: even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD. 3. An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD: even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever: 4. Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt: and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor, of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee. 5. Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam: but the LORD thy God

God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee. 6. Thou shalt not seek their peace, nor their prosperity all thy days for ever. 7. ¶ Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy brother: Thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian, because thou wast a stranger in his land. 8. The children that are begotten of them shall enter into the congregation of the LORD in their third generation.

Interpreters are not agreed what is here meant by *entering into the congregation of the Lord*, which is forbidden to eunuchs and to bastards, Ammonites and Moabites for ever, but to Edomites and Egyptians, only till the third generation. 1. Some think they are hereby excluded from communicating with the people of God in their religious services; though eunuchs and bastards were owned as members of the Church, and the Ammonites and Moabites might be circumcised and profelyted to the Jewish religion; yet they, and their families, must lie for some time under marks of disgrace, remembering the rock whence they were hewn, and must not come so near the sanctuary as others might, nor have so free a communion with Israelites. 2. Others think they are hereby excluded from bearing office in the congregation: none of these must be elders or judges, lest the honour of the magistracy should thereby be stained. 3. Others think they are excluded only from marrying with Israelites. Thus the learned Bishop Patrick inclines to understand it; yet we find, that when this law was put in execution after the captivity, they separated from Israel, not only the strange wives, but all the mixed multitude, see *Neh. xiii. 1, 2, 3*. With the daughters of these nations (though out of the nations of Canaan) it should seem the men of Israel might marry if they were completely profelyted to the Jewish religion; but with the men of these nations the daughters of Israel might not marry, nor could they be naturalized, except as here excepted.

It is plain in general, that disgrace is here put, 1. Upon bastards and eunuchs, *ver. 1, 2*. By bastards here, the Jewish writers understand, not all that were born of fornication, or out of marriage; but all that were of those incestuous mixtures which are forbidden, *Lev. xviii*. And though it was not the fault of the issue, yet to deter people from those unlawful marriages, and unlawful lusts, it was very convenient that their posterity should thus be made infamous. By this rule Jephtha, though the son of a harlot, a strange woman, (*Judg. xi. 1, 2*.) yet he was not a bastard in the sense of this law. And for the eunuchs, though by this law they seemed to be cast out of the vineyard as dry trees, which they complain of, *Isa. lvi. 3*. yet it is there promised, *ver. 5*. that if they took care of their duty to God, as far as they were admitted, by keeping the sabbaths and choosing the things that pleased him, the want of this privilege should be made up to them with such spiritual blessings, as would entitle them to an everlasting name.

2. Upon Ammonites and Moabites, the posterity of Lot, who for his outward convenience had separated himself from Abraham, *Gen. xiii. 11*. And we do not find that he or his ever joined themselves again to the children of the covenant. They are here cut off to the tenth generation, that is, (as some think it is explained) for ever. Compare *Neh. xiii. 1*. The reason of this quarrel Israel must have with them, so as not to seek their peace, *ver. 6*. is, because of the unkindnesses they had now lately done to the camp of Israel, notwithstanding the orders God had given not to distress or vex them, *Deut. ii. 9, 10*. (1.) It was bad enough that they did not meet them with bread and water in the way, *ver. 4*. that they did not as allies or at least as neutral states, bring victuals into their camp, which they should have been duly paid for. It was well God's Israel did not need their kindness, God himself following them with bread and water: However, this omission of the Ammonites should be remembered against their nation in future ages. Note, God will certainly reckon, not only with those that oppose the people, but with those that do not help and further them, when it is in the power of their hand to do it. The charge at the great day is for an omission, *I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat*. (2.) The Moabites had done worse, they hired Balaam to curse them, *ver. 4*. It is true, God turned the curse into a blessing, *ver. 5*. not only changing the word in Balaam's mouth, but making that really turn to the honour and advantage of Israel, which was designed for their ruin. But though the design was defeated and over-ruled for good, the Moabites wickedness was not the less provoking. God will deal with sinners; not only according to their deeds, but according to their endeavours, *Psal. xxviii. 4*.

3. The Edomites and Egyptians have not so much a mark of displeasure put upon them, as the Moabites and Ammonites had. If an Edomite or Egyptian turned profelyte, his grand-children should be looked upon as members of the congregation of the Lord to all intents and purposes, *ver. 7, 8*. We would think the Edomites had been more injurious to the Israelites than the Ammonites, and deserved as little favour from them, *Numb. xx. 20*. and yet thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, as thou must an Ammonite, for he is thy brother. Note, The unkindnesses of near relations, though by many worst taken, yet should with us, for that reason, because of the relation, be first forgiven. And then as to the Egyptians, here is a strange reason given why they must not be abhorred, *thou wast a stranger in their land*, and therefore though hardly used there, be civil to them, for old acquaintance sake. They must not remember their bondage in Egypt, for the keeping up of any ill-will to the Egyptians, but only for the magnifying of God's power and goodness in their deliverance.

9. ¶ When the host goest forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing. 10. ¶ If there be among you any man that is not clean, by reason of uncleanness that chanceth him by night, then shall he go abroad out of the camp, he shall not come within the camp, 11. But it shall be when evening cometh on, he shall wash himself with water: and when the sun is down, he shall come into the camp again. 12. ¶ Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad. 13. And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon: and it shall be when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee. 14. For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee: therefore shall thy camp be holy, that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.

Israel was now encamped, and this vast army was just entering upon action, which was likely to keep them together for a long time, and therefore it was fit to give them particular directions for the good ordering of their camp. And the charge is in one word to be clean. They must take care to keep their camp pure from moral, ceremonial, and natural pollution.

1. From moral pollution, *ver. 2*. When the host goes forth against thine enemy, then look upon thyself as in a special manner engaged to keep thyself from every evil thing. (1.) The soldiers themselves must take heed of sin, for sin takes off the edge of valour; guilt makes men cowards. They that put their lives in their hands are concerned to make and keep their peace with God, and preserve a conscience void of offence, then may they look death in the face without terror. Soldiers in executing their commission, must keep themselves from gratifying the lusts of malice, covetousness, or uncleanness, for those are wicked things; must keep themselves from the idols, or accursed things, they found in the camps they plundered. (2.) Even they that tarried at home, the body of the people, and every particular person, must at that time especially keep from every wicked thing, lest by sin they provoke God to withdraw his presence from the host, and give victory to the enemy for the correcting of his own people. Times of war should be times of reformation, else how can we expect God should hear and answer our prayers for success? *Psal. lxxvi. 18*. See *1 Sam. vii. 3*.

2. From ceremonial pollution, which befel a man in the night against his will, for which he was bound to wash his flesh in water, and look upon himself as unclean until the evening, *Lev. xv. 16*. A soldier, notwithstanding the constant service and duty he had to do in the camp, must be so far from looking upon himself as discharged from the observance of that ceremony, that more was required from him then than at another time; had he been at his own house he needed only to wash his flesh, but being in the army he must go abroad out of the camp, as one concerned to keep it pure, and ashamed of his own impurity, and not return till after sun-set, *ver. 10, 11*. By this trouble and reproach which even involuntary pollutions exposed men to, they were taught to keep up a very great dread of all fleshly lust. It were well if military men would consider this.

3. From natural pollution; they must go out of the camp to ease nature, and must take care to cover their excrements, *ver. 12, 13, 14*. It is strange that the divine law, or at least the solemn order and direction of Moses should extend to a thing of this nature; but the design of it was to teach them, (1.) Modesty and good decorum; nature itself teaches men thus to distinguish themselves from beasts that know no shame. (2.) Cleanliness and (though not niceness) neatness, even in their camp: Nastiness is offensive to the senses God has endued us with, prejudicial to the health, a wrong to the comfort of human life, and an evidence of a careless slothful temper of mind. (3.) Purity from the pollutions of sin; if there must be this care taken to preserve the body clean and sweet, much more should we be solicitous to keep the mind so. (4.) A reverence of the divine majesty. This is the reason here given, for the Lord thy God walketh by his ark, the special token of his presence, in the midst of thy camp, with respect to that external symbol this external purity is required, which, (though not insisted on in the letter when that reason ceaseth, yet) teacheth us to preserve inward purity of soul, in consideration of the eye of God, which is always upon us. By this expression of respect to the presence of God among them, they were taught both to fortify themselves against sin, and to encourage themselves against their enemies with the consideration of that presence. (5.) A regard one to another. The filthiness of one is noisome to many; this law of cleanliness therefore teaches us not to do that which will be justly offensive to our brethren, and grieve them. It is a law against nuisances.

15. ¶ Thou shalt not deliver unto his master, the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee. 16. He shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose, in one of thy gates where it liketh him best, thou shalt not oppress him. 17. ¶ There shall be no whore of the daughter of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel. 18. Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the LORD thy God. 19. ¶ Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury. 20. Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury, but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to, in the land whither thou goest to possess it. 21. ¶ When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God thou shalt not slack to pay it; for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee: and it would be sin in thee. 22. But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. 23. That which is gone out of thy lips, thou shalt keep and perform; even a free-will offering according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth. 24. When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill, at thine own pleasure: but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel. 25. When thou comest into the standing-corn of thy neighbours, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand: but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn.

Orders are here given about five several things which have no relation one to another.

1. The land of Israel is here made a sanctuary, or city of refuge for servants that were wronged and abused by their masters, and fled thither for shelter from the neighbouring countries, *ver. 15, 16*. We cannot suppose that they were hereby obliged to give entertainment to all the rogues that out-ran their services; Israel needed not (as Rome at first did) to be thus peopled. But, 1. They must not deliver up the trembling servant to his enraged master, till upon trial it appeared that the servant had wronged his master, and was justly liable to punishment. Note, It is an honourable thing to shelter and protect the weak, provided they be not wicked. God doth allow his people should patronize the oppressed. The angel bid

Hagar return to her mistress, and St. Paul sent Onesimus back to his master Philemon, because they had neither of them any cause to go away, nor were either of them in any danger in returning. But the servant here is supposed to escape, i. e. to run for his life, to the people of Israel, of whom he had heard (as Benhadad of the kings of Israel, 1 Kings xx. 31.) that they were a merciful people, to save himself from the fury of a tyrant, and in that case to deliver him up, is to throw a lamb into the mouth of a lion. 2. If it appeared that the servant was abused, they must not only protect him, but supposing him willing to embrace their religion, they must give him all the encouragement that might be to settle among them. Care is taken both that he should not be imposed upon in the place of his settlement; let it be that which he shall choose, and where it liketh him best; and that he should not exchange one hard master for many, thou shalt not oppress him. Thus would he soon find a comfortable difference between the land of Israel and other lands, and would choose it to be his rest for ever. Note, Profelytes and converts to the truth should be treated with particular tenderness, that they may not be in temptation to return.

2. The land of Israel must be no shelter for the unclean; no whore, no sodomite must be suffered to live among them, ver. 17, 18. neither a whore nor a whoremonger. No houses of uncleanness must be kept either by men or women. Here is, (1.) A good reason intimated why there should be no such wickedness tolerated among them; they were Israelites: That therefore seems to have an emphasis laid upon it. For a daughter of Israel to be a whore, or a son of Israel a whoremonger, is to reproach the stock they are come of, the people they belong to, and the God they worship. It is bad in any, but worse in Israelites, a holy nation, 2 Sam. xiii. 12. (2.) A just mark of displeasure put upon this wickedness, that the hire of a whore, i. e. the money she gets by her whoring, and the price of a dog, i. e. of the sodomite, pimp, or whoremonger, (so I incline to understand it, for such are called dogs, Rev. xxii. 15.) the money he gets by his lewd and villainous practices, no part of it shall be brought into the house of the Lord (as was commonly done by the prostitutes among the Gentiles) for any vow. This intimates, (1.) That God would not accept of any offering at all from such wicked people; they had nothing to bring an offering of but what they got by their wickedness, and therefore their sacrifice could not but be an abomination to the Lord, Prov. xv. 8. (2.) That they should not think by making and paying vows, and bringing offerings to the Lord to obtain leave to go on in this sin, as (it should seem) some that followed that trade suggested to themselves, when their offerings were admitted, Prov. vii. 14, 15. *This day have I paid my vows, therefore came I forth to meet thee.* Nothing should be accepted in commutation of penance. (3.) That we cannot honour God with our substance, unless it be honestly and honourably come by. It must not only be considered what we give, but how we got it; God hates robbery for burnt-offerings, and uncleanness too.

3. The matter of usury is here settled, ver. 19, 20. (1.) They must not lend upon usury to an Israelite. They had and held their estates immediately from and under God, who while he distinguished them from all other people, might have ordered, had he so pleased, that they should have all things in common among themselves; but instead of that, and in token of their joint interest in the good land that he had given them, he only appointed them as there was occasion, to lend to one another without interest; which among them would be little or no loss to the lender, because their land was so divided, their estates so settled, and there was so little of merchandize among them, that it was seldom or ever that they had occasion to borrow any great sums, but only for the subsistence of their families, when the fruits of their ground had met with any disaster, or the like; and in such a case, for a small matter, to insist upon usury would have been very barbarous. When the borrower gets or hopes to get, it is just the lender should share in the gain: but to him that borrows for his necessary food pity must be shewed, and we must lend hoping for nothing again, if we have wherewithal to do it, Luke vi. 45. (2.) They might lend to a stranger upon usury, who was supposed to live by trade, and (as we say) by turning the penny, and therefore got by what he borrowed, and came among them in hopes to do so. By this it appears that usury is not in itself oppressive; for they must not oppress a stranger, and yet might exact usury from him.

4. The performance of the vows wherewith we have bound our souls is here required; and it is a branch of the law of nature, ver. 21, 22, 23. (1.) We are here left at our liberty whether we will make vows or no. *If thou shalt forbear to vow* (some particular sacrifice and offering, more than was commanded by the law) *it shall be no sin to thee.* God had already signified his readiness to accept a free-will offering thus vowed, though it were but a little *fine flour*, Lev. ii. 4, &c. which was encouragement enough to those who were so inclined. But lest the priests, who had the largest share of those vows and voluntary offerings, should sponge upon the people, by pressing it upon them as their duty to make such vows, beyond their ability and inclination, they are here expressly told it should not be reckoned a sin in them, if they did not make any such vows, as it would be if they omitted any of the sacrifices that God had particularly required. For (as Bishop Patrick well expresseth it) God would have men to be easy in his service, and all their offerings to be free and cheerful. (2.) We are here laid under the highest obligations, when we have made a vow to perform it, and to perform it speedily; thou shalt not slack to pay it, for fear lest if it be delayed beyond the first opportunity, thy zeal abate, the vow be forgotten, or something happen to disable thee from the performance of it. *That which is gone out of thy lips* as a solemn and deliberate vow must not be recalled, but thou shalt keep and perform it, punctually and fully. The rule of the gospel goes somewhat farther than this, 2 Cor. ix. 7. *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart*, though it have not gone out of his lips, *so let him give.* Here is a good reason why we should pay our vows, that if we do not God will require it of us, will surely and severely reckon with us, not only for lying, but for going about to mock him, who cannot be mocked. See Eccl. vii. 4, 5.

5. Allowance is here given when they passed through a corn-field or a vineyard, to pluck and eat of the corn or grapes that grew by the road-side, whether it was done for necessity or delight, only they must carry none away with them, ver. 24, 25. Therefore the disciples were not censured for plucking the ears of corn, it was well enough known, that the law allowed it, but for doing it on the sabbath-day, which the tradition of the elders had forbidden. Now, 1. This law intimated to them what great plenty of corn and wine they should have in Canaan, so much that a little would not be missed out of their fruits; they should have enough for themselves and all their friends. 2. It provided for the support of poor travellers, to relieve the fatigue of their journeys, and teach us to be kind to such. The Jews say, the care was chiefly intended in favour of labourers, who were employed in gathering in their harvest and vintages, their mouths must not be muzzled no more than that of the ox when he treads out the corn. 3. It teaches us not to insist upon property in a small matter, of which it is easy to say, *What is that between me and thee?* It was true, the grapes which the passenger ate were none of his own, nor did the proprietor give them him, but the thing was of so small value, that he had reason to think, were he present, he would not deny them him, no more than he

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himself would grudge the like courtesy, and therefore it was no theft to take them. 3. It used them to hospitality, and teacheth us to be ready to distribute, willing to communicate, and not to think every thing lost that is given away. Yet, lastly, It forbids us to abuse the kindness of our friends, and to take the advantage from fair concessions to make unreasonable encroachments: we must not draw an ell from those that give but an inch; they may eat of their neighbour's grapes: but it doth not therefore follow that they may carry them away.

C H A P. XXIV.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The toleration of divorce, ver. 1—4. (2.) A discharge of new-married men from the war, ver. 5. (3.) Laws concerning pledges, ver. 6, 10—13, and 17. (4.) Against man-stealing, ver. 7. (5.) Concerning the leprosy, ver. 8, 9. (6.) Against the injustice of masters towards their servants, ver. 14, 15. Judges in capital causes, ver. 16. and civil concerns, ver. 17, 18. (7.) Of charity to the poor, ver. 19—22.

1. **W**HEN a man hath taken a wife and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. 2. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. 3. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; 4. Her former husband which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled: for that is abomination before the LORD, and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

This is that permission which the Pharisees erroneously referred to as a precept, Mat. xix. 7. *Moses commanded to give a writing of divorcement*; it was not so; our Saviour told them, he only suffered it because of the hardness of their hearts, lest if they had not had liberty to divorce their wives, they should have ruled them with rigour, and, it may be, have been the death of them. It is probable that divorces were in use before, they are taken for granted, Lev. xxi. 14. and Moses thought it needful here to give some rules concerning them.

1. That a man might not divorce his wife, unless he found some uncleanness in her, ver. 1. It was not sufficient to say, he did not like her, or that he liked another better, but he must shew cause for his dislike; something that made her disagreeable and unpleasant to him, though it might not make her so to another. This uncleanness must mean something less than adultery, for, for that she was to die; and then the suspicion of it, for in that case he might give her the waters of jealousy; but it means either a light carriage, or a cross sroward disposition, or some loathsomeness fore or disface; nay, some of the Jewish writers suppose a stinking breath might be a just ground for divorce. Whatever is meant by it, doubtless it is something considerable, so that their modern doctors were out, who allowed divorce for every cause, though ever so trivial, Matt. xix. 3.

2. That it must be done not by word of mouth, for that might be spoken hastily, but by writing, and that put in due form, and solemnly declared, before witnesses, to be his own act and deed, which was a work of time, and left room for consideration, that it might not be done rashly.

3. That the husband might give it in the hand of his wife, and send her away; which some think obligeth him to endow her, and make provision for her according to her quality, and such as might help to marry her again; and good reason, since the cause of quarrel was not her fault but infelicity.

4. That being divorced, it was lawful for her to marry another husband, ver. 2. The divorce had dissolved the bond of marriage as effectually as death could; so that she was free to marry again, as if her first husband had been naturally dead.

5. That if her second husband (died or) divorced her, then still she might marry a third, the first husband should never take her again, (ver. 3, 4.) which he might have done if she had not married another; for by that act of her own she had perfectly renounced him for ever, and, as to him, was looked upon as defiled, though not as to another person. The Jewish writers say, this was to prevent a most vile and wicked practice, which the Egyptians had of changing wives; or perhaps it was intended to prevent men's rashness in putting away their wives; for the wife that was divorced, would be apt in revenge to marry another presently, and perhaps the husband that divorced her, how much soever he thought to mend himself by another choice, would find the next worse, and something in her more disagreeable; so that he would wish for his first wife again: No, (saith this law) you shall not have her, you should have kept her when you had her. Note, It is best to be content with such things as we have, since changes made by discontent often prove for the worse. The uneasiness we know is commonly better, though we are apt to think it worse, than that which we do not know. By the strictness of this law, God illustrates the riches of his grace in his willingness to be reconciled to his people that had gone a whoring from him, Jer. iii. 1. *Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me*, for his thoughts and ways are above ours.

5. ¶ When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken. 6. ¶ No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man's life to pledge. 7. ¶ If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandize of him, or selleth him: then that thief shall die, and thou shalt put evil away from among you. 8. ¶ Take heed in the plague of leprosy, that thou observe diligently, and do according to all that the priests and the Levites shall teach you: as I commanded them, so ye shall observe to do. 9. Remember what the LORD thy God did

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unto Miriam by the way, after that ye were come forth out of Egypt. 10. ¶ When thou dost lend thy brother any thing, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge. 11. Thou shalt stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend, shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee. 12. And if the man be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge. 13. In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee: and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the LORD thy God.

Here is, 1. Provision made for the preservation and confirmation of love between new married people, ver. 5. This fully follows upon the laws concerning divorce, which would be prevented if their affection to each other were well settled at first. If the husband were much abroad from his wife the first year, his love to her would be in danger of cooling, and of being drawn aside to others he would meet with abroad, therefore his service to his country in war, embassies, or other public business that would call him from home, shall be dispensed with, *that he may cheer up the wife which he has taken.* Note, (1.) It is of great consequence that love be kept up between the husband and wife, and that every thing be very carefully avoided which might make them strange one to another, especially at first; for in that relation, where there is not the love that should be, there is an inlet ready to abundance of guilt and grief. (2.) One of the duties of that relation is to cheer up one another, under the cares and crosses that happen, as helpers of each other's joy; for a cheerful heart doth good like a medicine.

2. A law against *man stealing*, ver. 7. It was not death by the law of Moses to steal cattle or goods, but to steal a child, or a weak and simple man, or one that a man had in his power, and to make merchandize of him, this was a capital crime, and could not be expiated, as other thefts, by restitution; so much is *a man better than a sheep*, Matt. xii. 12. It was a very heinous offence, for, (1.) It was robbing the public of one of its members. (2.) It was taking away a man's liberty, the liberty of a free-born Israelite, which was next in value to his life. (3.) It was driving a man out from the inheritance of the land, to the privileges of which he was entitled, and bidding him go serve other gods, as David complains against Saul, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19.

3. A memorandum concerning the leprosy, ver. 8, 9. (1.) The laws concerning it must be carefully observed. The laws concerning it we had, Lev. xiii. and xiv. they are here said to be commanded to the priests and Levites, and therefore are not repeated in a discourse to the people; but the people are here charged in case of leprosy, to apply themselves to the priest according to the law, and to abide by his judgment, so far as it agreed with the law, and the plain matter of fact. The plague of leprosy being usually a particular mark of God's displeasure for sin; he in whom the signs of it did appear, ought not to conceal it, or cut out the signs of it, or apply himself to the physician for relief; but he must go to the priest, and follow his directions. Thus they that feel their consciences under guilt and wrath, must not cover it, or endeavour to shake off their convictions, but by repentance and prayer, and humble confession, take the appointed way to peace and pardon. (2.) The particular case of Miriam, who was smitten with leprosy for quarreling with Moses, must not be forgotten: It was an explication of the law concerning the leprosy. Remember that, and, 1. Take heed of sinning after the similitude of her transgression, by despising dominions, and speaking evil of dignities, lest you thereby bring upon yourselves the same judgment. 2. If any of you be smitten with a leprosy, expect not that the law should be dispensed with, nor think it hard to be shut out of the camp, and so made a spectacle; there is no remedy; Miriam herself, though a prophetess, and the sister of Moses, was not exempted, but was forced to submit to this severe discipline, when she was under this divine rebuke. Thus since David, Hezekiah, Peter, and other great men, when they had sinned, humbled themselves, and took to themselves the shame and grief, let us not expect to be reconciled upon easier terms.

4. Some necessary orders given about pledges or pawns, for the securing of money lent. They are not forbidden to take such securities which would save the lender from loss, and oblige the borrower to be honest; but, (1.) They must not take the millstone for a pledge, ver. 6. for with that they ground the corn that was to be bread for their families; or if it were a public mill, with it the miller got his livelihood: and so it forbids the taking of any thing for a pledge, by the want of which a man was in danger of being undone. Consonant to this is the ancient common law of England, which provides, That no man be distrained by the utensils or instruments of his trade or profession, as the axe of a carpenter, or the books of a scholar, nor beasts belonging to the plough, as long as there are other beasts, of which distress may be made, (Coke, 1 Inst. fol. 47.) This teaches us to consult the comfort and subsistence of others as much as our own advantage. That creditor who cares not though his debtor and his family starve, nor is at all concerned what becomes of them, so he may but get his money or secure it, goes contrary not only to the law of Christ, but even to the law of Moses too. (2.) They must not go into the borrower's house to fetch the pledge, but must stand without, and he must bring it, ver. 10, 11. *The borrower (saith Solomon) is servant to the lender*, therefore lest the lender should abuse the advantage he has against him, and make a hand of it for himself, it is provided, that he take not what he pleases, but what the borrower can best spare. A man's house is his castle, even the poor man's house is so, and is here taken under the protection of the law. (3.) That a poor man's bed-clothes should never be taken for a pledge, ver. 12, 13. This we had before, Exod. xxii. 26, 27. If they were taken in the morning, they must be brought back again at night, which is in effect to say, they must not be taken at all. Let the poor debtor sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee, z. e. pray for thee, and praise God for thy kindness to him. Note, Poor debtors ought to be sensible (more sensible than commonly they are) of the goodness of those creditors that do not take all the advantage of the law against them, and to repay their kindnesses by their prayers for them, when they are not in a capacity of repaying it any other way. Nay, thou shalt not only have the prayers and good wishes of thy poor brother, but *it shall be righteousness to thee before the Lord thy God*, i. e. it shall be accepted and rewarded as an act of mercy to thy brother, and obedience to thy God, and an evidence of thy sincere conformity to the law. Though it may be looked upon by men, as an act of weakness, to deliver up the securities thou hast for thy debt, yet it shall be looked upon by thy God as an act of goodness, which shall in no wise lose its reward.

14. ¶ Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates. 15. At

this day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it, for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it; lest he cry against thee unto the LORD, and it be sin unto thee. 16. The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin. 17. ¶ Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless, nor take the widow's raiment to pledge. 18. But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bond-man in Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing. 19. ¶ When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hath forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it; it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. 20. When thou beatest thine olive-tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. 21. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. 22. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bond-man in the land of Egypt; therefore I command thee to do this thing.

Here, 1. Masters are commanded to be just to their poor servants, ver. 14, 15. (1.) They must not oppress them, either by overloading them with work, giving them undue and unreasonable rebukes, or withholding from them fitting maintenance. A servant, though a stranger to the common wealth of Israel, must not be abused, for *thou wast a bond-man*, in the land where thou wast a stranger, ver. 18. and thou knowest what a grievous thing it is to be oppressed by a task-master, and therefore a tenderness to those that are servants and strangers, and in gratitude to that God who set thee at liberty, and settled thee in a country of thy own, *Thou shalt not oppress a servant.* Let not masters be tyrants to their servants, for *their master is in heaven.* See Job xxxi. 13. (2.) They must be faithful and punctual in paying them their wages. *At his day thou shalt give him his hire*, not only pay it him in full, without fraud, but pay it in time without further delay. As soon as he has done his day's work, if he desire it, let him have his day's wages, as those labourers, *Matth. xx. 8. When even was come.* He that works by day-wages is supposed to live from hand to mouth, and cannot have to-morrow's bread for his family, till he is paid for this day's labour. If the wages be withheld, 1. It will be grief to the servant, for, poor man, he sets his heart upon it, or as the word is, he lifts up his own soul to it, he is earnestly desirous of it, as the reward of his work, Job vii. 2. and depends upon it as the gift of God's providence for the maintenance of his family. A compassionate master, though it should be somewhat inconvenient to himself, would not balk the expectation of a poor servant that is so fond to think of receiving his wages. But that is not the worst. 2. It will be guilt to the master. The injured servant will cry against thee to the Lord; since he has no one else to appeal to, he will lodge his appeal in the court of heaven, and it will be sin to thee. Or if he do not complain, the cause will speak for itself, *the hire of the labourers which is kept back by fraud will itself cry.* Jam. v. 4. It is a greater sin than most people think it is, and will be found to in the great day to put hardships upon poor servants, labourers, and workmen that we employ. God will do them right if men do not.

2. Magistrates and judges are commanded to be just in their administrations, 1. In those which we call *Pleas of the Crown*, a standing rule is here given, that *the fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children for the fathers*, ver. 16. If the children make themselves obnoxious to the law, let them suffer for it, but let not the parents suffer either for them, or with them; it is grief enough to them to see their children suffer: if the parents be guilty let them die for their own sin; but though God, the sovereign Lord of life, sometimes visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, especially the sin of idolatry, and when he deals with nations in their national capacity, yet he doth not allow men to do so. Accordingly we find Amaziah sparing the children, even then when the fathers were put to death for killing the king, 2 Kings xiv. 6. It was in an extraordinary case, and no doubt by special direction from heaven, that Saul's sons were put to death for his offence, and they died, rather as sacrifices than as malefactors, 2 Sam. xxi. 9—14. 3. In common pleas between party and party, great care must be taken that none whose cause was just should fare the worse for their weakness, nor for their being destitute of friends, as strangers, fatherless, and widows, ver. 17. *Thou shalt not pervert their judgment*, nor force them to give their very raiment for a pledge, by defrauding them of their right. Judges must be advocates for those that cannot speak for themselves, and have no friends to speak for them.

3. The rich are commanded to be kind and charitable to the poor. Many ways they are ordered to be so, by the law of Moses. The particular instance of charity here prescribed is, that they should not be greedy in gathering in their corn, and grapes, and olives, so as to be afraid of leaving any behind them, but be willing to over-look some, and let the poor have the gleanings, ver. 19, 20, 21, 22. (1.) Say not, it is all my own, and why should not I have it? But learn a generous contempt of property in small matters. One sheaf or two forgotten, will make thee never the poorer at the year's end, and it will do somebody good, if thou have it not. (2.) Say not, *what I give I will give*, and know who I give it to, why should I leave it to be gathered by I know not who, that will never thank me? But trust God's providence with the disposal of thy charity, perhaps that will direct it to the most necessitous. Or, Thou mayest reasonably think it will come to the hands of the most industrious, that are forward to seek and gather that which this law provides for them. (3.) Say not, what should the poor do with grapes and olives? It is enough for them to have bread and water; for since they have the same senses that the rich have, why should not they have some little share of the delights of sense? Boaz ordered handfuls of corn to be left on purpose for Ruth, and God blessed him. All that is left is not lost.

C H A P. XXV.

Here is, 1. A law to moderate the scourging of malefactors, ver. 1, 2, 3. 2. A law in favour of the ox that treads out the corn; ver.

ver. 4. 3. *For the disgracing of him that refused to marry his brother's widow*, ver. 5—10. 4. *For the punishment of an immodest woman*, ver. 11, 12. 5. *For just weights and measures*, ver. 13—16. 6. *For the destroying of Amalek*, ver. 17—19.

1. **I**F there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them, then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked. 2. And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number. 3. Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed: lest if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee. 4. Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.

Here is, A direction to the judges in scourging malefactors, ver. 1, 2, 3. (1.) It is here supposed, that if a man be charged with a crime, the accuser and the accused (*Actor* and *Reus*) should be brought face to face before the judges, that the controversy may be determined. (2.) If a man were accused of a crime, and the proof fell short, so that the charge could not be made out against him by the evidence; then he was to be acquitted, thou shalt justify the righteous, i. e. him that appears to the court to be so. If the accusation be proved, then the conviction of the accused is a justification of the accuser, as righteous in the prosecution. (3.) If the accused were found guilty, judgment must be given against him, thou shalt condemn the wicked; for to justify the wicked is as much an abomination to the Lord, as it is to condemn the righteous, Prov. xvii. 15. (4.) If the crime were not made capital by the law, then the criminal must be beaten. A great many precepts we have met with, which have not any particular penalty annexed to them, the violation of most of which the constant practice of the Jews was to punish by scourging, from which no person's rank or quality did exempt him, if he were a delinquent, but with this proviso, that he should never be upbraided with it, nor should it be looked upon as leaving any mark of infamy or disgrace upon him. The directions here given for the scourging criminals are, 1. That it be done solemnly; not tumultuously through the streets, but in open court before the judge's face, and with so much deliberation as that the stripes might be numbered. The Jews say, while execution was in doing, the chief justice of the court read with a loud voice, *Deut. xxviii. 58, 59. and Deut. xxix. 9.* and concluded with those words, *Psal. lxxviii. 39. But he being full of compassion forgave their iniquity.* Thus it was made a sort of religious act, and so much the more likely to reform the offender himself, and to be a warning to others. 2. That it be done in proportion to the crime, according to his fault, that some crimes might appear as they are more heinous than others, the criminal being beaten with many stripes, to which perhaps that is an allusion, *Luke xii. 47, 48.* 3. That how great soever the crime were the number of stripes should never exceed forty, ver. 3. Forty five one was the common usage, as appears, *2 Cor. xi. 24.* It seems they always gave Paul as many stripes as ever they gave to any malefactor whatsoever. They abated one, either for fear of having miscounted, (though one of the judges was appointed to number the stripes) or, because they would never go to the utmost rigour, or, because the execution was usually done with a whip of three lathes, so that thirteen stripes, (each one being counted for three) made up thirty-nine, but one more by that reckoning would have been forty-two. The reason given for this is, *lest thy brother should seem vile unto thee.* He must still be looked upon as a brother, (*2 Thess. iii. 15.*) and his reputation as such was preserved, by this merciful limitation of his punishment. It saves him from seeming vile to his brethren, when God himself by his law takes this care of him: Men must not be treated as dogs; nor must those seem vile in our sight, to whom, for aught we know, God may yet give grace to make them precious in his sight.

3. A charge to husbandmen not to hinder their cattle from eating when they were working, if meat were within their reach, ver. 4. This instance of the beast that trod out the corn, (to which there is an allusion in that of the prophet, *Isa. x. 11.*) is put for other the like. That which makes this law very remarkable above its fellows (and which countenances the like application of other such laws) is that it is twice quoted in the New Testament, to shew, that it is the duty of the people to give their ministers a comfortable maintenance, *1 Cor. ix. 9, 10. and 1 Tim. v. 17, 18.* It teacheth us in the letter of it to make much of the brute creatures that serve us, and to allow them not only the necessary supports of this life, but the advantages of their labour; and thus we must learn not only to be just, but kind to all that are employed for our good, not only to maintain but to encourage them, especially those that labour among us in the word and doctrine, and so are employed for the good of our better part.

5. ¶ If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. 6. And it shall be, that the first-born which she beareth, shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel. 7. And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. 8. Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her: 9. Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. 10. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed. 11. ¶ When men strive together one with another, and the wife of the one draweth near for to deliver her husband out of the

hand of him that smiteth him, and putteth forth her hand, and taketh him by the secrets: 12. Then thou shalt cut off her hand, thine eye shall not pity her.

Here is, 1. The law settled concerning the marrying of a brother's widow. It appears by the story of Judah's family that this had been an ancient usage, *Gen. xxxviii. 8.* for keeping up of distinct families. The case put is a case that often happens, of a man's dying without issue, it may be in the prime of his time, soon after his marriage, and while his brethren were yet so young as to be unmarried. Now in this case, (1.) The widow was not to marry again into any other family, unless all the relations of her husband did refuse her, that the estate she was endowed with might not be alienated. (2.) The husband's brother, or next of kin must marry her, partly with respect to her, who having forgotten her own people and her father's house, shall have all possible kindness shewed her by the family into which she was married; and partly with respect to the deceased husband, that though he was dead and gone he might not be forgotten, nor lost out of the genealogies of his tribes; for the first-born child, which the brother or next kinsman should have by the widow, should be denominated from him that was dead, and entered in the genealogy as his child, ver. 5. 6. Under that dispensation we have reason to think men had not so clear and certain a prospect of living themselves on the other side death, as we have now, to whom life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel, and therefore they could not but be the more desirous to live in their posterity, which innocent desire was in some measure gratified by this law, an expedient being found out, that though a man had no child by his wife, yet his name should not be put out of Israel, i. e. out of the pedigree, or, which was equivalent, remain there under the brand of childlessness. The Sadducees put a case to our Saviour upon this law, with a design to perplex the doctrine of the resurrection by it, *Matth. xxii. 24, &c.* perhaps insinuating, that there was no need of maintaining the immortality of the soul, and a future state, since the law had so well provided for the perpetuating of men's names and families in the world. But, (3.) If the brother, or next of kin, declined to do this good office to the memory of him that was gone, what must be done in that case? Why, 1. He shall be compelled to do it, ver. 7. If he like her not, he is at his liberty to refuse her, which some think was not permitted in this case before this law of Moses. Affection is all in all to the comfort of that relation; that is a thing which cannot be forced, and therefore the relation should not be forced without it. 2. Yet he shall be publicly disgraced for not doing it. The widow, as the person most concerned for the name and honour of the deceased, was to complain to the elders of his refusal: if he persisted in it, she was to pluck off his shoe, and spit in his face, in open court, (or as the Jewish doctors moderate it, spit before his face) thus to fasten a mark of infamy upon him, which was to stick to his family after him, ver. 8, 9, 10. Note, Those justly suffer in their own reputation, who do not do what they ought to preserve the name and honour of others. He that would not build up his brother's house, deserved to have this blemish put upon his own, that it should be called, the house of him that had his shoe loosed, in token that he deserved to go barefoot. In the case of Ruth, we find this law executed, *Ruth iv. 7.* only because upon the refusal of the next kinsman, there was another ready to perform the duty of an husband's brother, it was that other that plucked off the shoe, and not the widow; Boaz, and not Ruth.

2. A law for the punishing of immodest women, ver. 11, 12. The woman that by the foregoing law was to complain against her husband's brother for not marrying her, and to spit in his face before the elders, had need of a very good allurance, but lest the confidence which that law supported, should grow to an excess unbecoming the sex, here is a very severe but just law to punish impudence and immodesty. (1.) The instance of it is confessedly scandalous to the highest degree. A woman could not do it, unless she were perfectly lost to all virtue and honour. (2.) The occasion is such, as might in part excuse it; it was to help her husband out of the hands of one that was too hard for him. Now if the doing of it in a passion, and with such a good intention, was to be severely punished, much more when it were wantonly done and in lust. (3.) The punishment was, that her hand was to be cut off; and the magistrates must not pretend to be more merciful than God, thine eye shall not pity her. Perhaps our Saviour alludes to this law, when he commands us to cut off the right hand that offends us, or is an occasion of sin to us; better put the greatest hardships that can be upon the body than ruin the soul for ever. Modesty is the hedge of chastity, and therefore ought to be very carefully preserved and kept up by both sexes.

13. ¶ Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. 14. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. 15. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. 16. For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the LORD thy God. 17. ¶ Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way when ye were come forth out of Egypt: 18. How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and ye feared not God. 19. Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it.

Here is, 1. A law against deceitful weights and measures: they must not only not use them, but they must not have them; not have them in the bag, not have them in the house, ver. 13, 14. for if they had them, they would be strongly tempted to use them. They must not have a great weight and measure to buy by, and a small one to sell by, for that was to cheat both ways, when either was had enough; as we read of those that made the ephah small, in which they measured the corn they sold, and the shekel great, by which they weighed the money they received for it, *Amos vii. 5.* But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, ver. 15. That which is the rule of justice must itself be just, if that be otherwise, it is a constant cheat. This had been taken care of before, *Lev. xix. 35, 36.* This law is enforced with two very good reasons. (1.) That justice and equity will bring down upon us the blessing of God. The way to have our days lengthened, and

to prosper, is to be just and fair in all our dealings; *honesty is the best policy*. (2.) That fraud and injustice will expose us to the curse of God, *ver. 16*. Not only unrighteousness itself, but all that do unrighteously are an *abomination to the Lord*. And miserable is that man that is abhorred by his Maker. How hateful, particularly, all the arts of deceit are to God, Solomon several times observes, *Prov. xi. 1.—x. 10—23*. and the apostle tells us, *that the Lord is the avenger of all such as over-reach and defraud in any matter*, 1 Thess. iv. 6.

2. A law for the rooting out of Amalek. Here is a *just weight*, and a *just measure*; that as Amalek had measured to Israel, so it should be measured to Amalek again, (1.) The mischief Amalek did to Israel must be here remembered, *ver. 17, 18*. When it was first done it was ordered to be recorded, *Exod. xvii. 14, 15, 16*. and here the remembrance of it to be preserved, not in personal revenge, for that generation which suffered by the Amalekites was gone, so that these which now lived, and their posterity, could not have any personal resentment of the injury, but in a zeal for the glory of God, which was insulted by the Amalekites, that *throne of the Lord* against which the hand of Amalek was stretched out. The carriage of the Amalekites towards Israel is here represented, (1.) As very base and disingenuous. They had no occasion at all to quarrel with Israel, nor did they give them any notice, by a manifesto, or declaration of war; but took them at an advantage, when they were newly come out of the house of bondage, and for aught appeared to them, were only going to *sacrifice to God in the wilderness*. (2.) As very barbarous and cruel, for they smote them that were feeble, whom they should have succoured. The greatest cowards are commonly the most cruel, while those that have the courage of a man, will have the compassion of a man. (3.) As very impious and profane, they feared not God. If they had had any reverence for the majesty of the God of Israel, which they saw a token of in the cloud, or any dread of his wrath, which they lately heard of the power of over Pharaoh, they durst not have made this assault upon Israel. Well, here was the ground of the quarrel: and it shews how God takes what is done against his people, as done against himself; and that he will particularly reckon with those that discourage and hinder young beginners in religion, that (as Satan's agents) set upon the weak and feeble, either to divert them, or to disquiet them, and offend his little ones.

(2.) This mischief must in due time be revenged, *ver. 19*. When their wars were finished, by which they were to settle their kingdom, and enlarge their coast, when they must *make war upon Amalek*, *ver. 14*. not merely to chastise them, but to consume them, to *blot out the remembrance of Amalek*. It was an instance of God's patience that he deferred the vengeance so long, which should have led the Amalekites to repentance; yet an instance of the depth of the resentments, that the posterity of Amalek so long after were destroyed for the mischief done by their ancestors to the Israel of God. That all the world may see, and say, that he who *toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye*. It was near four hundred years after this, that Saul was ordered to put this sentence in execution, 1 Sam. xv. and was rejected of God because he did not do it effectually, but spared some of that devoted nation, in contempt not only of the particular orders he received from Samuel, but of this general command here given by Moses, which he could not be ignorant of. David afterwards made some destruction of them, and the Simeonites, in Hezekiah's time, smote the *rest that remained*, 1 Chron. iv. 43. for when God judgeth he will overcome.

C H A P. XXVI.

With this chapter Moses concludes the particular statutes which he thought fit to give Israel in charge at his parting with them; what follows is by way of sanction and ratification. In this chapter, Moses gives them a form of confession to be made by him that offered the basket of his first-fruits, ver. 1—11. 2. The protestation and prayer to be made after the disposal of the third year's tithe, ver. 12—15. He binds on all the precepts he had given them, (1.) By the divine authority; not I, but the Lord thy God has commanded thee to do these statutes, ver. 16. (2.) By the mutual covenant between God and them, ver. 17—19.

1. **A**ND it shall be when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein: 2. That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there. 3. And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the LORD thy God, that I am come unto the country which the LORD swore unto our fathers for to give us. 4. And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the LORD thy God. 5. And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous. 6. And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. 7. And when we cried unto the LORD God of our fathers, the LORD heard our voice and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression. 8. And the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an out-stretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs and with wonders. 9. And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, *even* a land that floweth with milk and honey. 10. And now behold, I have brought the first-fruits of the land, which thou, O LORD, hast given me: and thou shalt set it before the LORD thy God, and worship before the LORD thy God. 11. And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which

the LORD thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you.

Here is, 1. A good work ordered to be done, and that is, the presenting of a basket of their first-fruits to God every year, *ver. 1, 2*. Besides the *sheaf of first-fruits*, which was offered for the whole land, on the morrow after the passover, *Lev. xxiii. 10*. every man was to bring for himself a basket of first-fruits at the feast of Pentecost, when the harvest was ended, which is therefore called the *feast of first-fruits*, *Exod. xxiv. 22*. and is said to be kept with a *tribute of free-will offering*, *Deut. xvi. 10*. But the Jews say, the first-fruits, if not brought then, might be brought any time after between that and winter. When a man went into the field or vineyard at the time when the fruits were ripening, he was to mark that which he observed most forward, and to lay it by for first-fruits, wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates, some of each sort must be put in the same basket with leaves between them, and presented to God in the place which he should choose. Now from this law we may learn, (1.) To acknowledge God as the giver of all these good things which are the support and comfort of our natural life, and therefore to serve and honour him with them. (2.) To deny ourselves. What is first ripe we are most fond of; those that are nice and curious expect to be served with each fruit at its first coming in, *my soul desired the first ripe fruits*, Micah vii. 1. When therefore God appointed them to lay those by for him, he taught them to prefer the glorifying of his name, before the gratifying of their own appetites and desires. (3.) To give to God the first and best we have, as those that believe him to be the first and best of beings. They that consecrate the days of their youth, and the prime of their time, to the service and honour of God, bring him their first-fruits, and with such offerings he is well pleased. *I remember the kindness of thy youth*.

2. Good words put into their mouths to be said in the doing of this good work, as an explication of the meaning of this ceremony that it might be a reasonable service. The offerer must begin his acknowledgment before he delivered his basket to the priest, and then must go on with it, when the priest had set down the basket before the altar, as a present to God their great landlord, *ver. 3, 4*.

1. He must begin with a receipt in full for the good land which God had given them, *ver. 3*. *I profess that I am come now at last, after forty years wandering, unto the country which the Lord swore to give us*. This was most proper to be said when they came first into Canaan; probably when they had been long settled there, they varied from this form. Note, When God has made good his promises to us, he expects we should own it, to the honour of his faithfulness; this is like giving up the bond, as Solomon doth, 1 Kings viii. 56. *There has not failed one word of all his good promise*. And our creature-comforts are then doubly sweet to us, when we see them flowing to us from the fountain of the promise.

2. He must remember and own the mean original of that nation, which he was a member of; how great soever they were now, and he himself with them, their beginning was very small, which ought thus to be kept in mind throughout all the ages of their Church by this public confession, that they might not be proud of their privileges and advantages, but might for ever be thankful to that God whose grace chose them when they were so low, and raised them so high. Two things they must own for this purpose. (1.) The meanness of their common ancestor. *A Syrian ready to perish was my father*, *ver. 4*. Jacob is here called an Aramite, or Syrian, because he lived twenty years in Padan-Aram; his wives were of that country, and his children were all born there, except Benjamin; and perhaps the confessor means not Jacob himself, but that son of Jacob who was the father of his tribe. However it be, both father and sons were more than once ready to perish, by Laban's severity, Esau's cruelty, and the famine in the land; which last was the occasion of their going down into Egypt. *Laban the Syrian sought to destroy my father*, so the Chaldee; *had almost destroyed him*, so the Arabic. (2.) The miserable condition of their nation in its infancy. They sojourned in Egypt as strangers, they served there as slaves, *ver. 6*. and that a great while: as their father was called a Syrian, they might be called Egyptians; so that their possession of Canaan being so long discontinued, they could not pretend any tenant-right to it. A poor, despised, oppressed people they were in Egypt, and therefore, though now rich and great, had no reason to be proud or secure, or forgetful of God.

3. He must thankfully acknowledge God's great goodness, not only to himself in particular, but to Israel in general. (1.) In bringing them out of Egypt, *ver. 7, 8*. It is spoken of here as an act of pity, he looked on our affliction, and an act of power, he brought us forth with a mighty hand. This was a great salvation fit to be remembered upon all occasions, and particularly upon this; they need not grudge to bring a basket of first-fruits to God, for to him they owed it, that they were not now bringing in the tale of bricks to their cruel task-masters. (2.) In settling them in Canaan, *ver. 9*. *He hath given us this land*. Observe, He must not only give thanks for his own lot, but for the land in general, which was given to Israel; not only for this year's profits, but for the ground itself, which produced them, which God had graciously granted to his ancestors, and entailed upon his posterity. Note, The comfort we have in our particular enjoyments should lead us to be thankful for our share in public peace and plenty; and with present mercies we should bless God for the former mercies we remember, and the farther mercies we expect and hope for.

4. He must offer to God his basket of first-fruits, *ver. 10*. *I have brought the first-fruits of the land*, (like a pepper-corn) as a quit rent for the land which thou hast given me. Note, Whatever we give to God, it is out of his own that we give him, 1 Chron. xxix. 14. And it becomes us, who receive so much from him, to study what we shall render to him. The basket he set before God; and the priests, as God's receivers, had the first-fruits, as perquisites of their place, and fees for attending, *Numb. xviii. 12*.

Lastly, The offerer is here appointed, when he has finished the service, (1.) To give glory to God, *thou shalt worship the Lord thy God*. His first-fruits were not accepted without farther acts of adoration. A humble reverent, thankful heart, is that which God looks at and requires, and without that, all we can put in a basket will not avail. *If a man would give all the substance of his house to be excused from this, or in lieu of it, it would utterly be condemned*. (2.) To take the comfort of it to himself and his family, *ver. 11*. *Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing*. It is the will of God that we should not only be cheerful in our attendance upon his holy ordinances, but that we should be cheerful in our enjoyments of the gifts of his providence. Whatever good thing God gives us, it is his will that we should make the most comfortable use we can of it, yet still tracing the streams to the fountain of all comfort and consolation.

12. ¶ When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase, the third year, *which is the year of tithing*, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the

the fatherless and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled: 13. Then thou shalt say before the LORD thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them. 14. I have not eaten thereof in my mourning; neither have I taken away *ought* thereof for any unclean use, nor given *ought* thereof for the dead: but I have hearkened to the voice of the LORD my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me. 15. Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

Concerning the disposal of their tithe the third year, we had the law before, chap. xiv. 28, 29. The tithes of the other two years was to be spent in extraordinary at feasts, and that of the third year at home in entertaining the poor. Now because this was done from under the eye of the priests, and a great confidence was put in the people's honesty, that they would dispose of it according to the law, to the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, ver. 12. it is therefore required, that when at the next feast after, they appeared before the Lord, they should there testify (as it were) upon oath, in a religious manner, that they had fully administered, and been true to their trust.

1. They must make a solemn protestation to that purpose, ver. 13, 14. (1.) That no hallowed things were hoarded up, *I have brought them away out of mine house*, nothing now remains there but my own part. (2.) That the poor, and particularly poor ministers, poor strangers, and poor widows, had had their part according to the commandment. It is fit God, who by his providence gives us all we have, should by his law direct the using of it, and though we are not now under such particular appropriations of our revenue as they then were, yet in general we are commanded to give alms of such things as we have; and then, and not otherwise, all things are clean to us. Then we may take the comfort of our enjoyments, when God has thus had his dues out of them. This is a commandment which must not be transgressed, no not with an excuse of its being forgotten, ver. 13. (3.) That none of this tithe had been misapplied to any common use, much less to any ill use. This seems to refer to the tithe of the other two years, which was to be eaten by the owners themselves; they must profess, (1.) That they had not eaten of it in their mourning, when by their mourning for the dead they were commonly unclean; or they had not eaten of it grudgingly as those that all their days eat in darkness. (2.) That they had not sacrilegiously alienated it to any common use, for it was not their own. And lastly, That they had not given it for the dead, for the honour of their dead gods, or in hope of making it beneficial to their dead friends. Now the obliging of them to make this solemn protestation at the three years end, would be an obligation upon them to deal faithfully, knowing that they must be called upon thus to purge themselves. It is our wisdom to keep conscience clear at all times, that when we come to give up our account we may lift up our face without spot. The Jews say, that this protestation of their integrity was to be made with a low voice, because it looked like a self commendation; but that the foregoing confession of God's goodness was to be made with a loud voice to his glory. He that durst not make this protestation, must bring his trespass-offering, Lev. v. 15.

2. To this solemn protestation they must add a *solemn prayer*, ver. 15, not particularly for themselves, but for God's people Israel, for in the common peace and prosperity every particular person prospereth and hath peace. We must learn from hence to be public-spirited in prayer, and to wrestle with God for blessings for the land and nation, our English Israel, and for the universal Church, which we are directed to have an eye to in our prayers, as the *Israel of God*, Gal. vi. 16. In this prayer we are taught, 1. To look up to God as in a holy habitation, and from thence to infer that holiness becomes his house, and that he will be sanctified in those that are about him. 2. To depend upon the favour of God, and his gracious cognizance, as sufficient to make us and our people happy. 3. To reckon it wonderful condescension in God to cast an eye, even upon so great and honourable a body as Israel was. It is looking down. 4. To be earnest with God for a blessing upon his people Israel, and upon the land which he has given us. For how should the earth yield its increase, or if it do, what comfort can we take in it, unless therewith God, even our own God, give us his blessing? Psal. lxxvii. 6.

16. This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments; thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. 17. Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice. 18. And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments: 19. And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour, and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken.

Two things Moses here urges to enforce all these precepts.

1. That they were the *commands of God*, ver. 16. They were not the dictates of his own wisdom, nor were they enacted by any authority of his own, but infinite wisdom framed them, and the power of the King of kings made them binding to them. The LORD thy God commands thee, therefore thou art bound in duty and gratitude to obey him, and it is at thy peril if thou disobey. They are his laws, therefore thou shalt do them, for to that end were they given thee: do them and not dispute them, do them and not draw back from them; do them not carelessly and hypocritically; but with thy heart and soul, thy whole heart, and thy whole soul.

2. That their covenant with God obliged them to keep these commands.

No. XXIX.

He insists not only upon God's sovereignty over them, but his propriety in them, and the relation wherein they stood to him. The covenant is mutual, and it binds to obedience both ways.

1. That we may perform our part of the covenant, and answer the intentions of that, ver. 17. *Thou hast avouched* and solemnly owned and confessed the LORD Jehovah to be thy God, thy prince and ruler. As he is so by an incontestible right, so he is by thine own consent. They did this implicitly by their attendance on his word, had done it expressly, Exod. xxiv. and were now to do it again before they parted, Deut. xxiv. 1. Now this obligeth us in fidelity to our word, as well as in duty to our sovereign to keep his statutes and his commandments. We really forswear ourselves, and perditionally violate the most sacred engagements, if when we have taken the Lord to be our God, we do not make conscience of obeying his commands.

2. That God's part of the covenant also may be made good, and the intentions of that answered, ver. 18, 19. The LORD has avouched, not only taken, but publicly owned thee to be his *Segullah*, his peculiar people, as he has promised thee, i. e. according to the true intent and meaning of the promise. Now their obedience was not only the condition of this favour, and of the continuance of it; if they were not obedient God would disown them, and cast them off: but it was also the principal design of this favour. He has avouched thee on purpose, that thou shouldest keep his commandments, that thou mightest have both the best directions and the best encouragements in religion. Thus we are *clest to obedience*, 1 Pet. i. 2. *chosen that we should be holy*, Eph. i. 4. purified a peculiar people, that we might not only do good works, but be zealous in them, Tit. ii. 14.

Two things God is here said to design in avouching them to be his peculiar people, ver. 19. To make them high, and in order to that, to make them holy; for holiness is true honour, and the only way to everlasting honour. (1.) To make them high above all nations. The greatest honour we are capable of in this world is to be taken into covenant with God, and to live in his service. *High in praise*; for God would accept them, that is true praise, Rom. ii. 29. Their friends would admire them, Psal. xlviii. 2. Their enemies would envy them, Zeph. iii. 19, 20. *High in name*, which some think speaks the continuance and perpetuity of that praise, a name that shall not be cut off. And *high in honour*, i. e. in all the advantages of wealth and power, which would make them great among their neighbours. See Jer. xiii. 11. (2.) That they might be a holy people, separated for God, devoted for him, and employed continually in his service. This God aimed at in taking them to be his people; so that if they did not keep his commandments, they received all this grace in vain.

CHAP. XXVII.

Moses having very largely and fully set before the people their duty, both to God and one another, in general and in particular instances; having shewed them plainly what is good, and what the law requires of them; and having in the close of the foregoing chapter laid them under the obligation both of the command and the covenant, he comes in this chapter to prescribe outward means.

1. For the helping of their memories, that they might not forget the law as a strange thing. They must write all the words of this law upon stones, ver. 1—10. 2. For the moving of their affections, that they might not be indifferent to the law as a light thing. When they were come into Canaan, the blessings and curses which were the sanctions of the law, were to be solemnly pronounced in the hearing of all Israel, who were to say Amen to them, ver. 11—26. And if such a solemnity as this would not make a deep impression upon them, and affect them with the great things of God's law, nothing would.

1. AND Moses with the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, Keep all the commandments which I command you this day. 2. And it shall be on the day when ye shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaister them with plaister. 3. And thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law, when thou art passed over, that thou mayest go in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, a land that floweth with milk and honey: as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee. 4. Therefore it shall be when ye be gone over Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaister them with plaister. 5. And there shalt thou build an altar unto the LORD thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them. 6. Thou shalt build the altar of the LORD thy God of whole stones; and thou shalt offer burnt-offerings thereon unto the LORD thy God. 7. And thou shalt offer peace-offerings, and shalt eat there, and rejoice before the LORD thy God. 8. And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly. 9. ¶ And Moses, and the priests the Levites, spake unto all Israel, saying, Take heed and hearken, O Israel, this day thou art become the people of the LORD thy God. 10. Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the LORD thy God, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day.

Here is, 1. A general charge to the people to keep God's commandments, for in vain do they know them, unless they would do them. This is pressed upon them, (1.) With all authority. *Moses with the elders of Israel*, the rulers of each tribe, ver. 1. and again, ver. 9. *Moses and the priests the Levites*; so that the charge is given by Moses who was king in J. shurun, and by their lords, both spiritual and temporal, in concurrence with him. Lest they should think that it was Moses only, an old and dying man, that made such ado about religion, or the priests and Levites only whose trade it was to attend religion, and who had their maintenance out of it; the elders of Israel, whom God had placed in honour and power over them, and who were men of business in the world, and likely to be long so when Moses was gone, they commanded their people to keep God's law. Moses having put

put some of his honour upon them joins them in commission with himself, in giving this charge, as St. Paul sometimes in his epistles joins with himself Silvanus and Timotheus. Note, All that have any interest in others, or power over them, should use it for the support and furtherance of religion among them. Though the supreme power of a nation provide ever so good laws for this purpose, if inferior magistrates in their places, and ministers in theirs, and masters of families in theirs, do not do their offices, it will all be to little effect. (1.) With all importunity. They press it upon them with the utmost earnestness, *ver. 9, 10. Take heed and hearken O Israel.* It is a thing that requires and deserves the highest degree of caution and attention. They tell them of their privilege and honour, *this day thou art become the people of the Lord thy God*, the Lord having avouched thee to be his own, and being now about to put thee in possession of Canaan, which he had long promised as *thy God*, Gen. xvii. 7, 8. and which if he had failed to do in due time, he would have been ashamed to be called *thy God*, Heb. xi. 16. now thou art more than ever his people, therefore *obey his voice*. Privileges should be improved as engagements to duty. Should not a people be ruled by their God?

2. A particular direction to them, with great solemnity, to register the words of this law, as soon as they were come into Canaan. It was to be done but once, and at their entrance into the land of promise, in token of their taking possession of it under the several provisos and conditions contained in this law. There was a solemn ratification of the covenant between God and Israel at mount Sinai, there was an altar erected, and twelve pillars; and the book of the covenant was produced, *Exod. xxiv. 4.* That which is here appointed is a solemnity somewhat like that.

1. They must set up a monument on which they must write the words of this law. 1. The monument itself was to be very mean; only rough unhewn stones plaistered over; not polished marble, or alabaster, not brass tables, but common plaister upon stone, *ver. 2.* It is repeated again, *ver. 4.* and orders given that it be written, not very finely, to be admired by the curious, but very plainly, that he that runs might read it, *Hab. ii. 2.* The word of God needs not to be set off by the art of man, not embellished with the enticing words of man's wisdom. But, 2. The inscription was to be very great. *All the words of this law*, *ver. 3.* and again, *ver. 8.* Some understand it only of the covenant between God and Israel, mentioned *chap. xxvi. 17, 18.* Let this heap be set up for a witness, like that memorial of the covenant between Laban and Jacob, which was nothing but a heap of stones thrown hastily together, upon which they did eat together in token of friendship, *Gen. xxxi. 46, 47.* and that stone which Joshua set up, *Josh. xxiv. 27.* Others think the curses of the covenant in this chapter were written upon this monument, the rather because it was set up in mount Ebal, *ver. 4.* Others think the whole book of Deuteronomy was written upon this monument; or at least the statutes and judgments which began at *chap. xii.* and so to the end of *chap. xxvi.* And it is not improbable, that the heap might be so large as taking in all the sides of it to contain so copious an inscription; unless we will suppose (as some do) that the ten commandments only were here written; as an authentic copy of the close rolls which were laid up in the ark. They must write this when they were gone into Canaan, and yet Moses saith, *ver. 3. Write it that thou mayest go in*, i. e. that thou mayest go in with comfort, and assurance of success and settlement, and otherwise as good not go in at all. Write it as the conditions of thine entry, and own that thou comest in upon these terms, and no other: since Canaan is given by promise, it must be held by obedience.

2. They must also set up an altar. By the words of the law which were written upon the plaister God spake to them: By the altar and the sacrifices offered upon it they spoke to God, and thus was communion kept up between them and God. The word and prayer must go together. Though they might not of their own heads set up any altar besides that at the tabernacle, yet, by the appointment of God, they might, upon a special occasion. Elijah built an extempore altar of twelve unhewn stones like this here, when he brought Israel back to this covenant which was now made, *1 Kings xviii. 31, 32.* Now, 1. This altar must be made of such stones as they found ready upon the field, not new cut out of the rock, much less squared artificially, *thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them*, *ver. 5.* Christ, our altar, is a stone cut out of the mountains without hands, Dan. ii. 34, 35. and therefore refused by the builders, as having no form or comeliness, but accepted of God the Father, and made the head of the corner. 2. Burnt-offerings and peace-offerings must be offered upon this altar, *ver. 6, 7.* that by them they might give glory to God, and obtain his favour. Where the law was written, an altar was set up close by it, to signify, that we could not look with any comfort upon the law, being conscious to ourselves of the violation of it, if it were not for the great sacrifice by which atonement is made for sin; and the altar was set up on mount Ebal, the mount on which those tribes stood that said Amen to the curses, to intimate that through Christ we are redeemed from the curse of the law. In the Old Testament the words of the law are written, with the curse annexed, which would fill us with horror and amazement, if we had not in the New Testament (which is bound up with it) an altar erected close by it, which gives us an everlasting consolation. 3. They must eat there, and rejoice, before the Lord their God, *ver. 7.* This signified, 1. The consent they gave to the covenant; for the parties to a covenant by feasting together ratified the covenant. They were partakers of the altar which was God's table, as his servants and tenants, and so they acknowledged themselves, and being put in possession of this good land, bound themselves to pay the rent, and do the services reserved by the royal grant. 2. The comfort they took in the covenant; they had reason to rejoice in the law; when they had an altar, a remedial law, so near it; it was a great favour to them, and a token for good, that God gave them his statutes; and that they were owned as the people of God, and the children of the promise, was that they had reason to rejoice in, though when this solemnity was to be performed, they were not put in full possession of Canaan; but God has spoken in his holiness, and then I will rejoice, *Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine*; all my own.

11. ¶ And Moses charged the people the same day saying, 12. These shall stand upon mount Gerizzim to bless the people, when ye are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin. 13. And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse; Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. 14. ¶ And the Levites shall speak, and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice, 15. Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place: and all the people shall answer and say, Amen. 16. Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his

mother: and all the people shall say, Amen. 17. Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's land-mark: and all the people shall say, Amen. 18. Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way: and all the people shall say, Amen. 19. Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow: and all the people shall say, Amen. 20. Cursed be he that lieth with his father's wife; because he uncovereth his father's skirt: and all the people shall say, Amen. 21. Cursed be he that lieth with any manner of beast: and all the people shall say, Amen. 22. Cursed be he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother: and all the people shall say, Amen. 23. Cursed be he that lieth with his mother-in-law: and all the people shall say, Amen. 24. Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbour secretly: and all the people shall say, Amen. 25. Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person: and all the people shall say, Amen. 26. Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them: and all the people shall say, Amen.

When the law was written to be seen and read by all men, the sanctions of it were to be published, which, to complete the solemnity of their covenanting with God, they were deliberately to declare their approbation of. This they were before directed to do, *chap. xi. 29, 30.* and therefore the appointment here begins somewhat abruptly, *ver. 12.* There were it seems in Canaan, that part of it which afterwards fell to the lot of Ephraim (Joshua's tribe) two mountains that lay near together, with a valley between, one called Gerizzim, and the other Ebal. On the sides of these two mountains, which faced one another, all the tribes were to be drawn up, six on one side, and six on the other, so that in the valley, at the foot of each mountain they came pretty near together, so near as that the priests standing betwixt them might be heard by those that were next them on both sides; then when silence was proclaimed, and attention commanded, one of the priests, or perhaps more at some distance from each other, pronounced with a loud voice one of the curses here following, and all the people that stood on the side and foot of mount Ebal, (those that stood farther off taking the signal from those that stood nearer and within hearing) said Amen; then the contrary blessing was pronounced, Blessed is he that doth so or so, and then those that stood on one side, and at the foot of mount Gerizzim, said Amen. This could not but effect them very much with the blessings and curses, the promises and threatenings of the law; and not only acquaint all the people with them, but teach them to apply them to themselves.

1. Something is to be observed in general concerning this solemnity, which was to be done but once and not repeated, but would be talked of to posterity.

1. God appointed which tribes should stand upon mount Gerizzim, and which on mount Ebal, *ver. 12, 13.* to prevent the disputes that might have arisen if they had been to dispose of themselves. The six tribes that were appointed for blessing were all the children of the free woman, for to such the promise belongs, *Gal. iv. 31.* Levi is here put among the rest, to teach ministers to apply to themselves the blessing and the curse which they preach to others, and by faith to set their own amen to it.

2. Of those tribes that were to say Amen to the blessings it is said, they stood to bless the people, but of the other that they stood to curse, not mentioning the people, as loth to suppose that any of this people whom God had taken for his own should lay themselves under the curse. Or, perhaps the different way of expression intimates, that there was to be but one blessing pronounced in general upon the people of Israel, as a happy people, and that should ever be so, *if they were obedient*; and to that blessing the tribes on mount Gerizzim were to say Amen, Happy art thou, O Israel, and mayest thou ever be so; but then the curses come in as exceptions from the general rule, (and we know *exceptio firmat regulam*) Israel is a blessed people, but if there be any particular persons even among them, that do such and such things as are here mentioned, let them know that they have no part nor lot in the matter; but are under a curse. This shews how ready God is to bestow the blessing; if any fall under the curse they may thank themselves, they bring it upon their own heads.

3. The Levites or priests, such of them as were appointed for that purpose, were to pronounce the curses as well as the blessings. They were ordained to bless, *Deut. x. 8.* the priests did it daily, *Numb. vi. 23.* But they must separate between the precious and the vile; they must not give that blessing promiscuously, but must declare to whom it did not belong; lest those who had no right to it themselves should think to share in it by being in the crowd. Note, Ministers must preach the terrors of the law, as well as the comforts of the gospel; must not only allure people to their duty with the promises of a blessing, but affright them to it with the threatenings of a curse.

4. The curses are here expressed, but not the blessings; for as many as were under the law, were under the curse; but it was an honour reserved for Christ to bless us, and so to do that for us which the law could not do in that it was weak. In Christ's sermon upon thy mount, which was the true mount Gerizzim, we have blessings only, *Matt. v. 3, &c.*

5. To each of the curses the people were to say, Amen. It is easy to understand the meaning of Amen to the blessings. The Jews have a saying to encourage people to say Amen to the public prayers, *Whosoever answereth Amen after him that bleisseth, he is as he that bleisseth.* But how could they say Amen to the curses? 1. It was a profession of their faith in the truth of it; that these, and the like curses, were not bugbears to frighten children and fools, but the real declarations of the wrath of God against the ungodliness and righteousness of men; not one iota of which shall fall to the ground. 2. It was an acknowledgment of the equity of these curses; when they said Amen, they did in effect say, not only *It is certain it shall be so*; but *it is just it should be so.* They who do such things well deserve to fall and lie under the curse. 3. It was such an imprecation upon themselves, as strongly obliged them to have nothing to do with those evil practices upon which the curse is here entailed. Let God's wrath fall upon us, if ever we do such things. We read of those that entered into a curse (and with us that is the usual form of a solemn oath) to walk in God's law, *Neh. x. 29.* Nay, the Jews say, (as the learned Bishop Patrick quotes them) That all the people by saying this Amen, became bound for one another, that they would observe God's laws, by which every man was obliged, as far as he could

could, to prevent his neighbour from breaking these laws, and to reprove those that offended, lest they should bear sin, and the curse for them.

2. Let us now observe what are the particular sins against which the curse is here denounced.

1. Sins against the second commandment. This flaming sword is set to keep that commandment first, *ver.* 15. They are here cursed, not only that worship images, but that make them or keep them, if they be such (or like such) as idolaters used in the service of their gods, whether it be a graven image or a molten image, it comes all to one, it is an *abomination to the Lord*; though it be not set up in public, but in a secret place, though it be not actually worshipped, nor is it said to be designed for worship, but reserved there with respect, and a constant temptation, he that doth this may, perhaps, escape punishment from men, but he cannot escape the curse of God.

2. Against the fifth commandment, *ver.* 16. the contempt of parents is a sin so heinous that it is put next to the contempt of God himself. If a man abused his parents, either in word or deed, he fell under the sentence of the magistrate, and must be put to death, *Exod.* xxi. 15, 17. but to set light by them in his heart, was a thing which the magistrates could not take cognizance of, and therefore it is here laid under the curse of God, who knows the heart. Those are cursed children that carry themselves scornfully and insolently towards their parents.

3. Against the eighth commandment. The curse of God is here fastened, (1.) Upon an unjust neighbour, that removes the land-marks, *ver.* 17. See *chap.* xix. 14. (2.) Upon an unjust counsellor, who, when his advice is asked, maliciously directs his friends to that which he knows will be to his prejudice; which is making the blind to wander out of the way, under pretence of directing him in the way, than which nothing can be either more barbarous or more treacherous, *ver.* 18. Those that seduce others from the way of God's commandments, and entice them to sin, bring this curse upon themselves, which our Saviour has explained, *Matt.* xv. 14. *The blind lead the blind, and both shall fall into the ditch.* (3.) Upon an unjust judge, that perverted the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow, whom we should protect and vindicate, *ver.* 19. These are supposed to be poor and friendless, nothing to be got by doing them a kindness, nor any thing lost by disobliging them, and therefore judges were in temptation to side with their adversaries against right and equity, but cursed are such judges.

4. Against the seventh commandment. Incest is a cursed sin, with a sister, a father's wife, or a mother-in-law, *ver.* 20, 22, 23. These crimes not only exposed men to the sword of the magistrate, *Lev.* xx. 12. but, what is more dreadful, to the wrath of God; bestiality likewise, *ver.* 21.

5. Against the sixth commandment. Two of the worst kinds of murder are instanced in, 1. Murder unseen, when a man doth not set upon his neighbour as a fair adversary, giving him an opportunity to defend himself, but *smites him secretly*, *ver.* 24. as by poison or otherwise, when he sees not who hurt him. See *Psal.* x. 8, 9. Though such secret murders may go undiscovered and unpunished, yet the curse of God will follow them. 2. Murder under colour of law, which is of all other the greatest affront to God, for it makes an ordinance of his to patronize the worst of villains; and the greatest wrong to our neighbour, ruining his honour as well as his life; cursed therefore is he that will be hired, or bribed, either to accuse, or to convict, or to condemn, and so to *slay an innocent person*, *ver.* 25. *Psal.* xv. 5.

6. The solemnity concludes with a general curse upon him that confirmeth not, or as it might be read, that *performeth not all the words of this law to do them*, *ver.* 26. By our obedience to the law we set our seal to it, and so confirm it, as by our disobedience we do what lies in us to *dissuade it*, *Psal.* cxix. 126. The apostle following all the ancient versions, reads it, *cursed is every one that continues not*, *Gal.* iii. x. Lest those that were guilty of other sins, not mentioned in this commination, should think themselves safe from the curse, this last reaches all; not only those that do the evil which the law forbids, but those also who omit the good which the law requires; to this we must all say Amen, owning ourselves under the curse, justly to have deserved it, and that we must certainly have perished for ever under it, if Christ had not redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us.

C H A P. XXVIII.

This chapter is a very large exposition of two words in the foregoing chapter, the blessing and the curse. There those were pronounced blessed in general that were obedient, and those cursed that were disobedient; but because generals are not so affecting, Moses here descends to particulars, and describes the blessing and the curse, not in their fountains, those are out of sight, and therefore the most considerable, yet least considered, the favour of God the spring of all the blessings, and the wrath of God the spring of all the curses; but in their streams, the sensible effects of the blessing and the curse, for they are real things, and have real effects. 1. He describes the blessings that should come upon them if they were obedient, personal, family, and especially national, for in that capacity especially they are here treated with, *ver.* 1—14. 2. He more largely describes the curses, which would come upon them if they were disobedient, such as would be 1. Their extreme vexation, *ver.* 15—17. 2. Their utter ruin and destruction at last, *ver.* 45—67. This chapter is much to the same purpose with *Lev.* 26. setting before them life and death, good and evil; and the promise in the close of that chapter of their restoration upon their repentance is here likewise more largely repeated, *chap.* xxx. Thus as they had precept upon precept in the repetition of the law, so they had line upon line in the repetition of the promises and threatenings. And those are both there and here delivered, not only as sanctions of the law what should be conditionally, but as predictions of event, what would be certainly, that for a while the people of Israel would be happy in their obedience, but that at length they would be undone by their disobedience, and therefore it is said, *chap.* xxx. 1. *that all those things would come upon them, both the blessing and the curse.*

1. **A**ND it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day; that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: 2. And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD

thy God. 3. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. 4. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. 5. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. 6. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. 7. The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. 8. The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy store-houses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. 9. The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways. 10. And all the people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee. 11. And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers to give thee. 12. The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give thee rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. 13. And the LORD shall make thee the head and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath: if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them. 14. And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

The blessings are here put before the curses, to intimate, (1.) That God is slow to anger, but swift to shew mercy: he has said it, and sworn, that he would much rather we would obey and live, than sin and die. It is his delight to bless. (2.) That though both the promises and the threatenings are designed to bring and hold us to our duty; yet it is better that we be allured to that which is good by a filial hope of God's favour, than that we be frightened to it by a servile fear of his wrath. That obedience pleaseth best, which comes from a principle of delight in God's goodness.

Now, 1. We have here the condition upon which the blessing is promised. (1.) It is upon condition that they *diligently hearken to the voice of God*, *ver.* 1. 2. that they hear God speaking to them by his word, and use their utmost endeavour to acquaint themselves with his will, *ver.* 13. (2.) Upon condition that they *observe and do all his commandments*; and in order to obedience, there is need of observation: And that they *keep the commandments of God*, *ver.* 9. and *walk in his ways*. Not only do them for once; but keep them for ever; not only set out in his ways, but walk in them to the end. (3.) Upon condition, that they should not *go aside either to the right hand or to the left*, either to superstition on the one hand, or profaneness on the other; and particularly, that they should not go after other gods, *ver.* 14. Which was the sin that of all others they were most prone to, and God would be most displeased with. Let them take care to keep up religion, both the form and power of it, in their families and nation, and God would not fail to bless them.

2. The particulars of this blessing here promised.

1. It is promised, that the providence of God should prosper them in all their outward concerns. These blessings are said to overtake them, *ver.* 2. Good people sometimes in the sense of their own unworthiness, are ready to fly from the blessing, and to conclude it belongs not to them; but the blessing shall find them out and follow them notwithstanding; thus in the great day, the blessing will overtake the righteous that say, *Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee?* *Matth.* xxv. 37. It is promised,

(1.) That they should be safe and easy; a blessing should come upon their persons wherever they were, *in the city, or in the field*, *ver.* 3. Whether their habitation was in the town or country; whether they were husbandmen or tradesmen; whether their business called them into the city or into the field, they should be preserved from the dangers of both, and have the comforts of both. This blessing should attend them in their journeys, going out and coming in, *ver.* 6. Their persons shall be protected, and the affairs they went about should succeed well. Observe here, what a necessary and constant dependence we have upon God, both for the continuance and comfort of this life. We need him at every turn, in all the various moments of life; we cannot be safe if he withdraw his protection, nor easy if he suspend his favour: but if he bless us, go where we will, it is well with us.

(2.) That their families should be built up in a numerous issue, blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, *ver.* 4. and in that the Lord shall make thee plenteous, *ver.* 11. in pursuance of the promise made to Abraham, that his seed should be as the stars of heaven for multitude, and that God would be a God to them, than which a greater blessing, and more comprehensive, could not be entailed upon the fruit of their body. See *Isa.* lxi. 9.

(3.) That they should be rich, and have an abundance of all the good things of this life, which are promised them, not merely that they might have the pleasure of enjoying them, but (as Bishop Patrick observes out of one of the Jewish writers) that they might have wherewithal to honour God, and might be helped and encouraged to serve him cheerfully, and to proceed and persevere in their obedience to him. A blessing is promised, 1. On all they had without doors, corn and cattle in the field, *ver.* 4—11. Their cows and sheep particularly; which should be blessed for the owner's sakes, and made blessings to them. In order to this it is promised, that God would give them *rain in due season*, which is called his *good treasure*, *ver.* 12. because with this *river of God* the earth is enriched, *Psal.* lxxv. 9. Our constant supplies we must see coming from God's good treasure, and our own obligations to him for them; if he withhold his rain, the fruits both of the ground and of the cattle soon perish. 2. On all they had within doors, the basket and store, *ver.* 5. the store-houses, or barns, *ver.* 8. When it is brought home God will bless it, and blow upon it as sometimes he doth, *Hag.* i. 6, 9. We depend upon God and his blessing, not only for our yearly corn

of the field, but for our daily bread out of our basket and store, and therefore are taught to pray for it every day.

(4.) That they should have success in all their employments, which would be a constant satisfaction to them; *the Lord shall command the blessing* (and it is he only that can command it) upon thee, not only in all thou hast, but in all thou dost, all *that thou settest thine hand unto*, ver. 8. This intimates, that even when they were rich, they must not be idle, but must find some good employment or other to set their hand to, and God will own their industry, and *blest the work of their hand*, ver. 12. for that which *makes rich*, and keeps so, is the *blessing of the Lord upon the hand of the diligent*, Prov. x. 4—22.

(5.) That they should have honour among their neighbours, ver. 1. *The Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations*. He made them so by taking them into covenant with himself, chap. xxvi. 19. And he would make them more and more so by their outward prosperity, if they would not by sin disparage themselves. Two things should help to make them great among the nations. (1.) Their wealth, ver. 12. *Thou shalt lend to many nations upon interest*, which they were allowed to take from the neighbour nations, but they shall have no occasion to borrow. This would give them a mighty influence upon all about them: for the borrower is servant to the lender. It may be meant of trade and commerce, that they should export abundantly more than they should import, which would keep the balance on their side. (2.) Their power, ver. 13. *The Lord shall make thee the head*, to give law to all about them, to exact tribute, and to arbitrate all controversies. Every sheaf should bow to theirs; which should make them so considerable, that *all the people of the earth should be afraid of them*, ver. 10. i. e. should reverence their true grandeur, and dread making their enemies. The flourishing of religion among them, and the blessing of God upon them, would make them formidable to all their neighbours, terrible as an army with banners.

(6.) That they should be victorious over their enemies, and prosper in all their wars. If any were so daring as to rise up against them to oppress them, or encroach upon them, it should be at their peril, they should certainly fall before them, ver. 7. The forces of the enemy, though entirely drawn up to come against them one way, should be entirely routed and flee before them seven ways, each making the best of his way.

From the whole we learn, though it were well if men would believe it, that religion and piety is the best friend to outward prosperity. Though temporal blessings do not take up so much room in the promises of the New Testament, as they do in those of the Old, yet it is enough that our Lord Jesus has given us his word, (and sure we may take his word) that if we *seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof*, all other things shall be added to us, as far as infinite wisdom sees good, and who can desire it farther? *Matth. vi. 33.*

2. It is likewise promised, that the grace of God should *establish them a holy people*, ver. 9. Having taken them into covenant with himself he would keep them in covenant, and provided they used the means of steadfastness, he would give them the grace of steadfastness, that they should not depart from him. Note, Those that are sincere in holiness, God will establish in holiness; and he is of power to do it, Rom. xvi. 25. He that is holy shall be holy still; and those whom God establisheth in holiness, he thereby establisheth a people to himself, for as long as we keep close to God he will never forsake us. This *establishment of their religion would be the establishment of their reputation*, ver. 10. *All the people of the earth shall see, and own, that thou art called by the name of the Lord*, i. e. that thou art a most excellent and glorious people, under the particular care and countenance of the great God. They shall be made to know, that a people called by the name of *Jehovah*, is without doubt the happiest people under the sun, even their enemies themselves being judges. The favourites of heaven are truly great, and first or last it will be made to appear that they are so; if not in this world, yet at that day, when those who confess Christ now, shall be confessed by him before men and angels, as those whom he delights to honour.

15. ¶ But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments, and his statutes which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. 16. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. 17. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. 18. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. 19. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. 20. The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do; until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me. 21. The LORD shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it. 22. The LORD shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew: and they shall pursue thee until thou perish. 23. And the heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. 24. The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed. 25. The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them; and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. 26. And thy carcass shall be meat unto all the fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away. 27. The LORD will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed. 28. The LORD shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart. 29.

And thou shalt grope at noon day as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed, and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee. 30. Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof. 31. Thine ox shall be slain before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof: thine ass shall be violently taken away from before thy face, and shall not be restored to thee: thy sheep shall be given unto thine enemies, and thou shalt have none to rescue them. 32. Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look, and fail with longing for them all the day long: and there shall be no might in thine hand. 33. The fruit of thy land and all thy labours, shall a nation which thou knowest not, eat up; and thou shalt be only oppressed and crushed alway: 34. So that thou shalt be mad, for the light of thine eyes which thou shalt see. 35. The LORD shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head. 36. The LORD shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone. 37. And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee. 38. Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather but little in: for the locust shall consume it. 39. Thou shalt plant vineyards and dress them; but shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes: for the worms shall eat them. 40. Thou shalt have olive-trees throughout all thy coasts, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with the oil: for thine olive shall cast his fruit. 41. Thou shalt beget sons and daughters, but thou shalt not enjoy them: for they shall go into captivity. 42. All thy trees and fruit of thy land shall the locusts consume. 43. The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high: and thou shalt come down very low. 44. He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: He shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail.

Having viewed the bright side of the cloud which is towards the obedient, we have now presented to us the black and dark side which is towards the disobedient. If we do not keep God's commandments, we not only come short of the blessing promised; that is not all, but we lay ourselves under the curse, which is as comprehensive of all misery, as the blessing is of all happiness. Observe,

1. The equity of this curse. It is not a curse causeless, or for some light cause; God seeks not occasion against us, nor is he apt to quarrel with us; that which is here mentioned of bringing the curse, is, (1.) Despising God; refusing to *hearken to his voice*, ver. 15. which speaks the highest contempt imaginable; as if what he said were not worth the heeding, or we were not under any obligation to him. (2.) Disobeying him; *not doing his commandments*, or not observing to do them. None fall under his curse, but those that rebel against his command. (3.) Deserting him. It is because of the *wickedness of thy doings*, not only whereby thou hast slighted me, but whereby thou hast forsaken me, ver. 20. God never casts us off, till we first cast him off. It intimates, that their idolatry, by which they forsook the true God for false gods, would be their destroying sin, more than any other.

2. The extent and efficacy of this curse. These curses shall come upon thee from above, and shall overtake thee; though they endeavour to escape them, it is to no purpose to attempt it, they shall follow the whithersoever thou goest, and seize thee, overtake thee, and overcome thee, ver. 15. It is said of the sinner, when God's wrath is in pursuit of him, that he *would fain flee out of his hand*, Job xxvii. 22. but he cannot, if he *flee from the iron weapon*, yet the bow of steel shall reach him and strike him through. There is no running from God but by running to him, no fleeing from his justice but by fleeing to his mercy. See *Psal. xxi. 8.* (1.) Wherever the sinner goes, the curse of God follows him, wherever he is it rests upon him. He is *curled in the city, and in the field*, ver. 16. The strength of the city cannot shelter him from it, the pleasant air of the country is no fence against these pestilential steams. He is *curled*, ver. 19. when he comes in, for the curse is *upon the house of the wicked*, Prov. iii. 33. and he is *curled* when he goes out, for he cannot leave that curse behind him, nor get rid of it, which is entered into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. (2.) Whatever he has is under a curse, *curled is the ground for his sake*, and all that is on it, or comes out of it, and so he is *curled from the ground*, as Cain, Gen. iv. 11. The *basket and store* *curled*, ver. 17, 18. All his enjoyments being forfeited by him, are in a manner forbidden to him, as *curled things*, which he has no title to. To those whose *mind and conscience is defiled*, every thing else is so, *Tit. i. 15.* They are all embittered to him, he cannot take any true comfort in them, for the wrath of God mixes itself with them, and he is so far from having any security of the continuance of them, that if his eyes be open he may see them all condemned, and ready to be confiscated, and with them all his joys, and all his hopes gone for ever. (3.) Whatever he doth is under a curse too. It is a curse in all that he *setteth his hand unto*, ver. 20. A constant disappointment which they are subject to that set their hearts upon the world, and expect their happiness in it, and which cannot but be a constant vexation. This curse here is just the reverse of the blessing in the former part of the chapter. Thus whatsoever bliss there is in heaven, there is not only the want of it, but the contrary to it in hell, *Isa. lxxv. 13.* *My servants shall eat, and ye shall be hungry.*

Many particular judgments are here instanced in, which would be the fruits of the curse, and with which God would punish the people of the Jews for their apostasy and disobedience. 1. These judgments threatened are of divers kinds, for God has many arrows in his quiver, *four sore judgments* Ezek. xiv. 21. and many more. 2. They are here represented very terrible,

terrible, and the descriptions of them are exceeding lively and affecting, that men knowing these terrors of the Lord, might, if possible, be persuaded. 3. The threatenings of the same judgment are several times repeated, that they might make the more deep and lasting impressions; and to intimate that if they persisted in their disobedience, the judgment which they thought was over, and of which they said surely the bitterness of it is past, would return with double force, for whom God judgeth he will overcome.

1. Bodily diseases are here threatened; that they should be epidemical in their land. These God makes use of sometimes for the chastisement and improvement of his own people, *Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick*; But here they are threatened to be brought upon his enemies as tokens of his wrath, designed for their ruin. So that according to the temper of our spirits, under sickness, accordingly it is to us a blessing or a curse. But whatever sickness may be to particular persons, it is certain epidemical diseases raging among a people are national judgments, and so to be accounted. He here threatens, (1.) Painful diseases, *ver. 35.* a sore botch beginning in the legs and knees, but spreading like Job's boils from head to foot. And, (2.) Shameful diseases, *ver. 27.* the botch of Egypt, (such boils and blains as the Egyptians had been plagued with, when God brought Israel from among them) and the emerods and scab, vile diseases, the just punishment of those who by sin had made themselves vile. (3.) Mortal diseases. The pestilence, *ver. 21.* the consumption (put for all chronic diseases) and the fever (for all acute diseases) *ver. 22.* See *Lec. xxvi. 16.* and all incurable, *ver. 27.*

2. Famine, and scarcity of provisions; and this, (1.) For want of rain, *ver. 23, 24.* *The heaven over thy head*, that part that is over thy land, *shall be as dry as brass*, while the heavens over other countries shall distil their dews; and when the heaven is *as brass*, the earth of course will be *as iron*, hard and unfruitful. Instead of rain the dust shall be blown out of the highways into the field, and spoil that little there is of the fruits of the earth. (2.) By destroying insects. The locust shall destroy the corn, so that they should not have so much as their *feet again*, *ver. 38—42.* And the fruit of the vine, which should make glad their hearts, should all be worm-eaten, *ver. 39.* And the olive, some way or other, should be made to *cast its fruit*, *ver. 40.* The heathen use many superstitious customs in honour of their idol gods, for preserving the fruits of the earth: but Moses tells Israel, that the only way they had to preserve them was to keep God's commandments; for he is a God that will not be sported with, like as will be their idols, but served in spirit and truth. This threatening we find fulfilled in Israel, *1 Kings xvii. 1.* *Jer. xiv. 1.* *Joel i. 4.*

3. That they should be smitten before their enemies in war, who, it is likely, would be the more cruel to them, when they had them at their mercy, for the severity they had used against the nations of Canaan; which their neighbours in after-ages would be apt to remember against them, *ver. 25.* It would make their flight the more shameful, and the more grievous, that they might have triumphed over their enemies, if they had been but faithful to their God. The carcases of those that were slain in the war, or died in captivity among strangers, should be *meat to the fowls*, *ver. 26.* And an Israelite, having forfeited the favour of his God, should have so little humanity shewed him, as that *no man should fray them away*! so odious would God's curse make them to all mankind.

4. That they should be infatuated in all their counsels, so as not to discern their own interest, nor bring any thing to pass for the public good, *ver. 28, 29.* *The Lord shall finite thee with madness and blindness.* Note, God's judgments can reach the minds of men, to fill them with darkness and horror, as well as their bodies and estates; and those are the worst of judgments, which make men a terror to themselves, and their own destroyers. That which they contrived to secure themselves by, should fill turn to their prejudice. Thus we often find that the allies they confided in *distressed them*, and *helped them not*, *2 Chron. xxviii. 20.* Those that will not walk in God's counsels, are justly left to be ruined by their own; and those that are wilfully blind to their duty, deserve to be made blind to their interest; and seeing they *loved darkness rather than light*, let them *grope at noon-day* as in the dark.

5. That they should be plundered of all their enjoyments, stripped of all by the proud and imperious conqueror, such as Benhadad was to Ahab, *1 Kings xx. 5, 6.* Not only their houses and vineyards should be taken from them, but their wives and children, *ver. 30—32.* Their dearest comforts, which they took most pleasure in, and promised themselves most from, should be the entertainment and triumph of their enemies. As they had dwelt in houses which they builded not, and eaten of vineyards which they planted not, *chap. vi. 10, 11.* so others should do by them. Their oxen, asses, and sheep, like Job's, taken away before their eyes, and they should not be able to recover them, *ver. 31.* And all the fruit of their land and labours should be devoured and eaten up by the enemy; so that they and theirs would want necessities, while their enemies were revelling with that which they had laboured for.

6. That they should be carried captives into a far country: nay, into *all the kingdoms of the earth*, *ver. 24.* Their sons and daughters, whom they promised themselves comfort in, should go into captivity, *ver. 41.* And they themselves at length, and their king in whom they promised themselves safety and settlement, *ver. 36.* This was fully accomplished, when the ten tribes first were carried captive into Assyria, *2 Kings xvii. 6.* and not long after the two tribes into Babylon, and two of their kings, *2 Kings xxiv. 14, 15.—xxv. 7—21.* That which is mentioned as an aggravation of their captivity, is, that they should go into an unknown country, the language and customs of which would be very uncouth, and their treatment among them barbarous, and there they should *serve other gods*, i. e. be compelled to do by their enemies, as they were in Babylon, *Dan. iii. 6.* Note, God often makes men's sin their punishment, and chooseth their delusions. Ye shall *serve other gods*, i. e. ye shall serve those that do serve them; a nation is often in scripture called by the name of its god, as *Jer. xlviii. 7.* They had made idolaters their associates, and now God made idolaters their oppressors.

7. That those which remained should be insulted and tyrannized over by strangers, *ver. 43, 44.* So the ten tribes were by their colonies which the king of Assyria sent to take possession of their land, *2 Kings xvii. 24.* Or, this may be meant of the gradual encroachments which the strangers within their gates should make upon them, so as insensibly to worm them out of their estates. We read of the fulfilling of this, *Hos. vii. 9.* *Strangers have devoured his strength*; foreigners eaten the bread out of the mouths of true-born Israelites, by which they were justly chastised for introducing strange gods.

8. That their reputation among their neighbours should be quite sunk, and they that had been a name, and a praise, should be an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word, *ver. 37.* Some have observed the fulfilling of this threatening in their present state, for when we would express the most perfidious and barbarous treatment, we say, *None but a Jew would have done so.* Thus is sin a reproach to any people.

Lastly, To complete their misery, it is threatened that they should be put

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quite out of the possession of their own souls by all these troubles *ver. 34.* *Thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes*, i. e. quite bereaved of all comfort and hope, and abandoned to utter despair. Those that walk by sight, and not by faith, are in danger of losing reason itself, when every thing about them looks frightful; and their condition is woful indeed, that are *mad for the sight of their eyes.*

45. Moreover, all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed: because thou hearkenest not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee. 46. And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever. 47. Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things: 48. Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee. 49. The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, *as swift* as the eagle flieth, a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand: 50. A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young. 51. And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which *also* shall not leave thee *either* corn, wine, or oil, *or* the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee. 52. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, throughout all thy land which the LORD thy God hath given thee. 53. And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and thy daughters (which the LORD thy God hath given thee) in the siege, and in the straitness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee. 54. *So that* the man *that is* tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave: 55. So that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat: because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates. 56. The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter, 57. And toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and towards her children which she shall bear; for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates. 58. If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law, *that are* written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD; 59. Then the LORD will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, *even* great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance. 60. Moreover, he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee. 61. Also every sickness, and every plague which is not written in the book of this law, them will the LORD bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed. 62. And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude: because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the LORD thy God. 63. And it shall come to pass, *that as* the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you: so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. 64. And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, *even* wood and stone. 65. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind. 66. And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear, day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life. 67. In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even: and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning, for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear,

and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. 68. And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again, with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again; and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bond-men and bond-women, and no man shall buy you.

One would have thought enough had been said to possess them with a dread of that wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. But to shew how deep the treasures of that wrath are, and that still there is more and worse behind, Moses, when one would have thought he had concluded this dismal subject, begins again, and adds to this roll of curses, many like words; as Jeremiah did to his, chap. xxxvi. 32. It should seem that in the former part of this commination, Moses foretells their captivity in Babylon, and the calamities which introduced and attended that, by which even after their return they were brought to that low and poor condition, which is described, ver. 44. That their enemies should be the head, and they the tail: but here in this latter part, he foretells their last destruction by the Romans, and their dispersion thereupon. And the present deplorable state of the Jewish nation, and of all that have incorporated themselves with them by embracing their religion, doth so fully and exactly answer this prediction here in these verses, that it serves for an incontestible proof of the truth of prophecy, and consequently of the divine authority of the scripture. And this last destruction being here represented more dreadful than the former, it shews that their sin in rejecting Christ and his gospel, was more heinous and more provoking to God than idolatry itself, and left them more under the power of Satan; for their captivity in Babylon cured them effectually of their idolatry in seventy years time; but under this last destruction now for above 1700 years, they continue incurably averse to the Lord Jesus.

Observe, 1. What is here said in general of the wrath of God, which should light and lie upon them for their sins.

1. That if they would not be ruled by the commands of God, they should certainly be ruined by his curse, ver. 45, 46. Because thou didst not keep his commandments, (especially that of hearing and obeying the great prophet) these curses shall come upon thee, as upon a people appointed to destruction, the generation of God's wrath: and they shall be for a sign and for a wonder. It is amazing to think, that a people so long the favourites of heaven, should be so perfectly abandoned and cast off; that a people so closely incorporated, should be so universally dispersed; and yet that a people so scattered in all nations, should preserve themselves distinct, and not mix with any; but, like Cain, be fugitives and vagabonds, and yet marked to be known.

2. That if they would not serve God with cheerfulness, they should be compelled to serve their enemies, ver. 47, 48. that they might know the difference, 2 Chron. xii. 8. which some think is the meaning of Ezek. xx. 24. 25. Because they despised my statutes, I gave them statutes that were not good. Observe here, 1. It is justly expected from those to whom God gives an abundance of the good things of this life, that they should serve him. What doth he maintain us for but that we may do his work, and be some way serviceable to his honour? 2. The more God gives us, the more cheerfully we should serve him; our abundance should be oil to the wheels of our obedience. God is a master that will be served with gladness, and delights to hear us sing at our work. 3. If when we receive the gifts of God's bounty, we either do not serve him at all, or serve him with reluctance, it is a righteous thing with him to make us know the hardships of want and servitude. They deserve to have cause given them to complain, who complain without a cause, *Tristis es, & felix!* Happy, and yet not easy! bluish at thy own folly and ingratitude.

3. That if they would not give glory to God by an awful obedience, he would get him honour upon them by wonderful plagues, ver. 58, 59. Note, 1. God justly expects from us that we should fear his fearful name: and which is strange, that name which is here proposed as the object of our fear, is, *The Lord thy God*, which is very fitly here put in our Bibles, in capital letters; for nothing can sound more truly awful. As nothing is more comfortable, so nothing more awful than this, that he with whom we have to do is Jehovah, a being infinitely perfect and blessed, and the author of all being; and that he is our God, our rightful Lord and owner, from whom we are to receive laws, and to him we are to give account: this is great, and greatly to be feared. 2. We may justly expect from God, that if we do not fear his fearful name, we should feel his fearful plagues, for one way or other God will be feared. All God's plagues are dreadful; but some are wonderful, which carry in them extraordinary signatures of divine power and justice, so that a man upon the first view of them, may say, *Verily, there is a God that judgeth in the earth.*

2. How the destruction threatened is described. Moses is here upon the same melancholy subject that our Saviour is discoursing of to his disciples in his farewell sermon, Matt. xxiv. viz. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation.

Five things are here foretold, as steps to their ruin:

1. That they should be invaded by a foreign enemy, ver. 49, 50. A nation from far, viz. the Romans, as swift as the eagle, hastening to the prey; our Saviour makes use of this similitude, in foretelling this destruction, that where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together, Matth. xxiv. 28. And Bishop Patrick observes, (to make the accomplishment the more remarkable) that the ensign of the Roman armies was an eagle. This nation is said to be of a fierce countenance, an indication of a fierce nature, stern and severe, that would not pity the weakness and infirmity either of little children or of old people.

2. That the country should be laid waste, and all the fruits of it eaten up by this army of foreigners; which is the natural consequence of an invasion, especially when it is made, as the Romans was, for the chastisement of rebels, ver. 51. He shall eat the fruits of thy cattle and land, so that the inhabitants should be starved, while the invaders were fed to the full.

3. That their cities should be besieged, and that such would be the obstinacy of the besieged, and such the vigour of the besiegers, that they would be reduced to the last extremity, and at length fall into the hands of the enemy, ver. 52. No place, though ever so well fortified, no, not Jerusalem itself, though it held out long, would escape. Two of the common consequences of a long siege are here foretold. A miserable famine, which would prevail to that degree, and for want of food, they should kill and eat their own children, ver. 53. Men should do so, notwithstanding their hardness, and ability to bear hunger: and though obliged by the law of nature to provide for their own families, yet should refuse to give to the wife and children that were starving any of the child that was barbarously butchered, ver. 54, 55. Nay, that women, ladies of quality, notwithstanding their natural niceness about their food, and their natural affection to their children, yet, for want of food, should so far forget all humanity as to kill and eat them, ver. 56, 57. Let us observe by the way, how hard this fate must needs be to the tender and delicate woman, and learn not to in-

dulge ourselves in tenderness and delicacy, because we know not what we may be reduced to before we die; and the more nice we are, the harder it will be to us to bear want, and the more danger we shall be in of sacrificing reason, and religion, and natural affection itself to the clamours and craving of an unmortified ungoverned appetite. This threatening was fulfilled in the letter of it, more than once to the perpetual reproach of the Jewish nation: never was the like done either by Greek or Barbarian, but in the siege of Samaria, a woman boiled her own son, 2 Kings vi. 28, 29. And it is spoke of as commonly done among them in the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, Lam. iv. 10. And in the last siege by the Romans, Josephus tells us of a noble woman that killed and ate her own child, through the extremity of the famine, and when she had eaten one half secretly, ver. 57. that she might have it to herself, the mob smelling meat, got into the house, to whom she shewed the other half, which she had kept till another time, inviting them to share with her. What is too barbarous for them to do, that are abandoned of God? Sickness is another common effect of a strait and long siege; and that is here threatened: *pestilences, and of long continuance*, ver. 59. These should attend the Jews wherever they went afterwards, the diseases of Egypt, leprosy, botches, and foul ulcers, ver. 60. Nay, as if the particular miseries here threatened were not enough, he concludes with an &c. ver. 61. The Lord will bring upon thee every sickness, and every plague, though it be not written in the book of this law. Those that fall under the curse of God, will find that the one half was not told them of the weight and terror of that curse.

4. That multitudes of them should perish; so that they should become few in number, ver. 62. It was a nation that God had wonderfully increased, so that they were as the stars of heaven for multitude; but for their sin diminished and brought low, Psal. cvii. 38, 39. It is computed that in the destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans, as appears by the account Josephus gives of it, there were above two millions that fell by the sword, at several places, besides what perished by famine and pestilence; so that the whole country was laid waste and turned into a wilderness. That is a terrible word, ver. 63. As the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, so he will rejoice over you to destroy you. Behold here the goodness and severity of God; mercy here shines bright in the pleasure God takes in doing good; he rejoiceth in it; yet justice here appears no less illustrious in the pleasure he takes in destroying the impenitent; not as it is the making of his creatures miserable, but as it is the asserting of his own honour, and the securing of the ends of his government. See what a malignant mischievous thing sin is, which (as I may say) makes it necessary for the God of infinite goodness to rejoice in the destruction of his own creatures, even those that had been favourites.

3. That the remnant should be scattered throughout the nations. This completes the woe, ver. 64. The Lord shall scatter thee among all people. This is remarkably fulfilled in their present dispersion, for there are Jews to be found almost in all countries that are possessed either by Christians or Mahometans, and in such numbers, that it has been said, if they could unite in one common interest, they would be a very formidable body, and able to deal with the most powerful states and princes; but they abide under the power of this curse, and are so scattered as they are not able to incorporate. It is here foretold, that in this dispersion, (1.) They should have no religion, or none to any purpose; should have neither temple, nor altar, nor priesthood, for they should serve other gods. Some think this has been fulfilled in the force put upon the Jews in Popish countries, to worship the images that are used in the Roman Church to their great vexation. 2. They should have no rest; no rest of body, the sole of thy foot should not have rest, ver. 65. but be continually upon the remove either in hope of gain, or fear of persecution; all wandering Jews: no rest of the mind (which is much worse) but a trembling heart, ver. 65. no assurance of life, ver. 66. weary both of light and darkness which are in their turns both welcome to a quiet mind, but to them both day and night would be a terror, ver. 67. Such a toilsome Job was in once, (Job vii. 4.) but to them this should be constant and perpetual; that blindness and darkness which the apostle speaks of as having happened to Israel, and that guilt which bowed down their back away, Rom. xi. x, 9, 10. must needs occasion a constant restlessness and amazement. These are a torment to themselves and all about them that fear-day and night; and are always uneasy; let good people strive against it, and not give way to that fear which has torment; and let wicked people not be secure in their wickedness, for their hearts cannot endure, nor can their hands be strong, when the terrors of God set themselves in array against them. They that say in the morning, O that it were even, and in the evening, O that it were morning, shew, 1. A constant fret and vexation, chiding the hours for lingering, and complaining of the length of every minute; let times be precious to us when we are in prosperity, and then it will not be so tedious to us when we are in afflictions as otherwise it would. 2. A constant fright and terror; afraid in the morning of the arrow that flieth by day, and therefore wishing the day over, and what the better? When evening comes, the trembling heart is no less apprehensive of the terror by night, Psal. xci. 5, 6. Happy they whose minds being staid on God are quiet from the fear of evil. Observe here, the terror ariseth not only from the sight of the eyes, but from the fear of the heart, not only from the real dangers, but from imaginary ones, the causes of fear many times, when they come to be inquired into, prove to be only the creatures of the fancy.

Lastly, In the close God threatens to leave them as he found them, in a house of bondage, ver. 68. The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again, i. e. into such a miserable state as they were in when they were slaves to the Egyptians, and ruled by them with rigour. God had brought them out of Egypt, and had said, they shall see it no more again, Deut. xvii. 16. but now they should be reduced to the same state of slavery that they had been in there. To be sold to strangers would be bad enough, but much worse to be sold to their enemies. And even slaves may be valued as such, but a Jew should be in so ill a name for all that is nought, that when he was exposed to sale no man should buy him, which would make his master that had him to deal the more severe with him: Thirty Jews (they say) have been sold for one small piece of money, as they sold our Saviour for thirty pieces.

Now upon the whole matter, 1. The accomplishment of these predictions upon the Jewish nation shews, that Moses spake by the Spirit of God, who certainly foresees the ruin of sinners, and gives them warning of it, that they may prevent it by a true and timely repentance, or else be left inexcusable. 2. Let us all from hence learn to stand in awe, and not to sin. I have heard of a wicked man, who upon reading the threatenings of this chapter was so enraged, that he tore the leaf out of his Bible, as Jehoiakim cut Jeremiah's roll; but to what purpose is it to deface a copy, while the original remains upon record in the divine counsels, by which it is unalterably determined, that the wages of sin is death, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear.

C H A P. XXIX.

The first words of this chapter are the contents of it; These are the words of the covenant, ver. 1. these that follow; Here is, 1. A recital

recital of God's dealings with them, in order to the bringing of them into this covenant, ver. 2—8. 2. A solemn charge to them to keep the covenant, ver. 9. 3. An abstract of the covenant itself, ver. 12, 13. 4. A specification of the persons taken into the covenant, ver. 10, 11, 14, 15. 5. An intimation of the great design of this covenant against idolatry, in a parenthesis, ver. 16, 17. 6. A most solemn and dreadful denunciation of the wrath of God, against such persons as promise themselves peace in a sinful way, ver. 18—28. 7. The conclusion of this treaty, with a distinction between things secret and things revealed, ver. 29.

1. **THESE** are the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel, in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb. 2. ¶ And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his lands; 3. The great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs and those great miracles: 4. Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive; and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day. 5. And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot. 6. Ye have not eaten bread, neither have you drunk wine, or strong drink: that you might know that I am the LORD your God. 7. And when ye came unto this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, came out against us unto battle, and we smote them. 8. And we took their land, and gave it for an inheritance unto the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh. 9. Keep therefore the words of this covenant and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do.

Now Moses had largely repeated the commands which the people were to observe as their part of the covenant, and the promises and threatenings which God would make good (according as they behaved themselves) as his part of the covenant the whole is here summed up in a federal transaction. The covenant formerly made is here renewed, and Moses that was before, is still the mediator of it, ver. 1. The Lord commanded Moses to make it. Moses himself, though king in Jeshurun, could not make the covenant any otherwise than as God gave him instructions. It doth not lie in the power of ministers to fix the terms of the covenant, they are only to dispense the seals of it. This is said to be *beside the covenant made in Horeb*; for though the covenant was the same, yet it was a new promulgation and ratification of it. It is probable, some now living, though not of age to be mustered, were of age to consent for themselves to the covenant made at Horeb, and yet it is here renewed. Note, Those that have solemnly covenanted with God, should take all opportunities to do it again, as those that like their choice too well to change. But the far greater part were a new generation, and therefore the covenant must be made afresh with them, for it is fit the covenant should be renewed to the children of the covenant.

It is usual with indentures to begin with a recital; this doth so; with a rehearsal of the great things God had done for them. 1. As an encouragement to them, to believe that God will indeed be to them a God, for he would not have done so much for them, if he had not designed more, to which all he had hitherto done was but a preface (as it were) or introduction; nay, he had shewed himself a God in what he had hitherto done for them, which might raise their expectations of something great, and answering the vast extent and compass of that pregnant promise, that God would be to them a God. 2. As an engagement upon them to be to him an obedient people, in consideration of what he had done for them.

For the proof of what he here advanceth, he appeals to their own eyes, ver. 2. *Ye have seen all that the Lord did.* Their own senses are incontestible evidence of the matter of fact, that God had done great things for them; and then their own reason was a no less competent judge of the equity of his inference from it, ver. 9. *Keep therefore the words of this covenant.*

These things he instanceth in to shew the power and goodness of God in his appearances for them. (1.) Their deliverance out of Egypt, ver. 2, 3. The amazing signs and miracles by which Pharaoh was plagued, and compelled to dismiss them, and Israel was tried, (for they are called temptations) whether they could trust God to secure them from, and save them by, those plagues. (2.) Their conduct through the wilderness for forty years, ver. 5, 6. There they were led, and clad, and fed by miracles; though the paths of the wilderness were not only unknown but untrodden, yet God kept them from being lost there; and (as Bishop Patrick observes) those very shoes, which by the appointment of God they put on in Egypt at the passover when they were ready to march, (Exod. xii. 11.) never wore out, but served them to Canaan; and though they lived not upon bread which strengthens the heart, and wine which rejoiceth it, but upon manna, and rock-water, yet they were men of strength and courage, mighty men, and able to go forth to war. By these miracles they were made to know that the Lord is God, and by these mercies that he was their God. (3.) The victory they had lately obtained over Sihon, and Og, and that good land which they had taken possession of, ver. 7, 8. Both former mercies, and fresh mercies should be improved by us as inducements to obedience.

By way of inference from these memoirs, (1.) Moses laments their stupidity, ver. 4. *Yet the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive.* This doth not lay the blame of their senselessness, and sottishness, and unbelief, upon God, as if they had stood ready to receive his grace, and had begged for it, but he had denied them; no, but it fastens the guilt upon themselves. The Lord, who is the Father of spirits, a God in covenant with you, and who had always been so rich in mercy to you, no doubt would have crowned all his other gifts with this, he would have given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see, if you had not by your own forwardness and perverseness frustrated his kind intentions, and received his grace in vain. Note, 1. The hearing ear, the seeing eye, and the understanding heart, are the gift of God. All that have them, have them from him. 2. God gives, not only food and raiment, but wealth and large possessions to many to whom he doth not give grace. Many enjoy the gifts that have not hearts to perceive the giver, nor the true intention and use of the gifts. 3. God's readiness

to do us good in other things, is a plain evidence that if we have not grace, the best of gifts, it is our own fault and not his; he would have gathered us, and we would not. (2.) Moses chargeth them to be obedient, ver. 9. *Keep therefore and do.* Note, We are bound in gratitude and interest, as well as duty and faithfulness, to keep the words of the covenant.

10. ¶ Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel. 11. Your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood, unto the drawer of thy water; 12. That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy God, and into his oath, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day: 13. That he may establish thee to-day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. 14. Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; 15. But with him that standeth here with us this day before the LORD our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day. 16. (For ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt, and how we came through the nations which ye passed by. 17. And ye have seen their abominations, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them.) 18. Lest there should be among you man or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations: lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood, 19. And it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: 20. The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven. 21. And the LORD shall separate him unto evil, out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant, that are written in this book of the law: 22. So that the generation to come of your children that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the LORD hath laid upon it; 23. And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger and in his wrath: 24. Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger: 25. Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt. 26. For they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given unto them. 27. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book. 28. And the LORD rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day. 29. The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

It appears by the length of the sentences here, and by the copiousness and pungency of the expressions, that Moses, now he was drawing near to the close of his discourse, was very warm and zealous, and very desirous to impress what he said upon the minds of this unthinking people: To bind them the faster to God and duty, he here, with great solemnity of expression, (to make up the want of the external ceremony that was used, Exod. xxiv. 4, &c.) concludes a bargain (as it were) between them and God, an everlasting covenant which God would not forget, and they must not. He requires not their explicit consent, but lays the matter plainly before them, and then leaves it between God and their own consciences. Observe,

1. The parties to this covenant. (1.) It is the Lord their God they are to covenant with, ver. 12. To him they must give up themselves, to him they must join themselves. It is his oath; he has drawn up the covenant, and settled it; he requires your consent to it; he has sworn to you, and to him you must be sworn. This requires us to be sincere and serious, humble and reverent in our covenant-transactions with God, remembering how great a God he is with whom we are covenanting, who has a perfect knowledge of us, and an absolute dominion over us. (2.) They are all to be taken into covenant with him. They were all summoned to attend, ver. 2. and did accordingly, and are told, ver. 10. what was the design of their appearing before God now in a body; they were to enter into covenant with him. 1. Even their great men; the captains of their tribes, their elders, and officers, must not think it any disparagement to their honour; or any diminution to their power, to put their necks under the yoke of this covenant

nant and to draw in it. They must rather first enter into the covenant; to set a good example to their inferiors. 2. Not the men only, but their wives and children must come into this covenant; though they were not numbered, and mustered, yet they must be *joined to the Lord*, ver. 11. Observe, Even little ones are capable of being taken into covenant with God, and are to be admitted with their parents. Little children, so little as to be carried in arms, must be brought to Christ, and shall be blessed by him, for *of such was, and is, the kingdom of God*. 3. Not the men of Israel only, but the stranger that was in their camp, provided he was so far profelyed to their religion as to renounce all false gods, was taken into this covenant with the God of Israel, forasmuch as he also, though a stranger, was to be looked upon in this matter as a *son of Abraham*, Luke xix. 9. This was an early indication of favour to the Gentiles, and that kindness God had in store for them. 4. Not the freemen only, but the hewers of wood, and drawers of water, the meanest drudge they had among them: Note, As none are too great to come under the bonds of the covenant; so none are too mean to inherit the blessings of the covenant. In Christ no difference is made between *bond and free*, Col. iii. 11. *Art thou called, being a servant? care not for it*, 1 Cor. vii. 21. 5. Not only those that were now present before God in this solemn assembly, but those also that were not here with them, were taken into covenant, ver. 15. *As with him that standeth here with us; (so Bishop Patrick thinks it should be rendered) so also with him that is not here with us this day*; that is, 1. Those that tarried at home were included, that were detained either by sickness or necessary business, they must not therefore think themselves disengaged, no, every Israelite shares in the common blessings, they that tarry at home divide the spoil, and therefore every Israelite must own himself bound by the consent of the representative body. They who cannot go up to the house of the Lord, must keep up a spiritual communion with those that do, and be present in spirit when they are absent in body. 2. The generations to come are included. Nay, one of the Chaldee paraphrasts reads it, *All the generations that have been from the first days of the world, and all that shall arise to the end of the whole world, stand with us here this day*: And so, taking this covenant as a typical dispensation of the covenant of grace, it is a noble testimony to the mediator of that covenant, who is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*.

2. The summary of this covenant; all the precepts and all the promises of the covenant, are included in the covenant-relation between God and them, ver. 13. That they should be appointed, raised up, *established for a people to him*, to observe and obey him, to be devoted to him, and dependent on him, and that he should be to them a God, according to the tenor of the covenant made with their fathers, to make them holy, high, and happy. Their fathers are here named, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as examples of piety, which those must set themselves to imitate, who expected any benefit by the covenant made with them. Note, A due consideration of the relation we stand in to God as our God, and the obligation we lie under as a people to him, is enough to bring us to all the duties and all the comforts of that covenant.

3. The principal design of the renewing of this covenant at this time, was to fortify them against temptations to idolatry. Though other sins will be the sinner's ruin; yet this was the sin that was likely to be their ruin. Now concerning this, he shews,

1. The danger they were in of being tempted to it, ver. 16, 17. *You know we have dwelt in the land of Egypt*, a country addicted to idolatry, and it was well if there were not to this day among them some remains of the infection of that idolatry; we have passed by other nations, the Edomites, Moabites, &c. and have seen their abominations, and their idols, and some among you, it may be, have liked them too well, and still hanker after them, and would rather worship a wooden god that they can see, than an infinite Spirit whom they never saw. It is to be hoped, there were those among them, who the more they saw of these abominations and idols, the more they hated them; but there were those that were smitten with the sight of them, saw the accursed things, and coveted them.

2. The danger they were in if they yielded to the temptation. He gives them fair warning; It was at their peril if they forsook God to serve idols. If they would not be bound and held by the precepts of the covenant, they would find that the curses of the covenant would be strong enough to bind and hold them.

1. Idolatry would be the ruin of particular persons and their families, ver. 18—21. Where observe,

(1.) The sinner described, ver. 18. (1.) He is one whose heart turns away from his God; there the mischief begins, in the evil heart of unbelief, which inclines men to depart from the living God to dead idols. Even to this sin men are tempted, when they are drawn aside by their own lusts and fancies. They that begin to turn from God, by neglecting their duty to him, are easily drawn to other gods; and they that serve other gods, do certainly turn away from the true God; for he will admit of no rivals: he will be all or nothing. (2.) He is a root that bears gall and wormwood; i. e. He is a dangerous man, that being himself poisoned with ill principles and inclinations, with a secret contempt of the God of Israel and his institutions, and a veneration for the gods of the nations, endeavours by all arts possible to corrupt and poison others, and draw them to idolatry: this is a man whose fruit is hemlock (so the word is translated, *Hos. x. 4.*) and wormwood, it is very displeasing to God, and will be to all who are seduced by him *bitterness in the latter end*. This is referred to by the apostle, *Heb. xii. 15*. Where he is in like manner cautioning us to take heed of those that would seduce us from the Christian faith, they are the weeds or tares in a field, which, if let alone, will overspread the whole field. A little of this leaven will be in danger of infecting the whole lump.

(2.) His security in the sin. He promiseth himself impunity, though he persist in his impiety, ver. 19. Though he *heareth the words of the curse*, so that he cannot plead ignorance of the danger, as other idolaters; yet even then he *blesteth himself in his own heart*, thinks himself safe from the wrath of the God of Israel, under the protection of his idol-gods, and therefore *sith, I shall have peace*, though I be governed in my religion not by God's institution but by my own imagination, to add drunkenness to thirst, one act of wickedness to another. Idolaters were like drunkards, violently set upon their idols themselves, and industrious to draw others in with them. Revelling commonly accompanied their idolatries, 1 Pet. iv. 3. so that this speaks a woe to drunkards, (especially the drunkards of Ephraim) who when they are awake, being thirsty, *seek it yet again*, Prov. xxiii. 35. And those that made themselves drunk in honour of their idols, were the worst of drunkards. Note, 1. There are many who are under the curse of God, and yet bless themselves; but it will soon be found that in blessing themselves, they do but deceive themselves. 2. Those are ripe for ruin, and there is little hopes of their repentance, who have made themselves believe that they shall have peace though they go on in a sinful way. 3. Drunkenness is a sin that hardens the heart, and debaucheth the conscience as much as any other, to which men are strangely tempted themselves, even when they have newly felt the mischiefs of it, and are strangely fond to draw others to, *Hab. ii. 15*. And such an ensnaring sin is idolatry.

(3.) God's just severity against him for the sin, and for that impious affront he put upon God, in saying, he should have peace, though he went on, so giving the lie to eternal truth, (*Gen. iii. 4*) There is scarce a threatening in all the book of God that sounds more dreadful than this here. O that presumptuous sinners would read it and tremble! For it is not a bugbear to frighten children and fools, but a real declaration of the wrath of God against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, ver. 20, 21. (1.) *The Lord shall not spare him*. The days of his reprieve, which he abuseth will be shortened, and no mercy remembered in the midst of judgment. (2.) *The anger of the Lord and his jealousy*, which is the fiercest anger, *shall smite against him like the smoke of a furnace*. (3.) *The curses written shall lie upon him*, not only light upon him to terrify him, but *abide upon him* to sink him to the lowest hell, *John iii. 36*. (4.) *His name shall be blotted out*, i. e. he himself shall be cut off, and his memory shall rot, and perish with him. (5.) He shall be *separated unto evil*, which is the most proper notion of a curse; he shall be cut off from all happiness, and all hope of it, and marked out for misery without remedy. And, (lastly) All this according to the curses of the covenant, which are the most fearful curses, being the just revenges of abused grace.

2. Idolatry would be the ruin of their nation; it would bring plagues upon the land that connived at this root of bitterness, and received the infection: as far as the sin spread, the judgment should spread likewise.

1. The ruin is described. It begins with plagues and sicknesses, ver. 22. to try if they will be reclaimed by lesser judgments; but if not, it ends in a total overthrow, like that of Sodom, ver. 23. As that valley which had been like the garden of the Lord for fruitfulness, was turned into a lake of salt and sulphur, so should the land of Canaan be made desolate and barren, as it has been ever since the last destruction of it by the Romans. The lake of Sodom bordered close upon the land of Israel, that by it they might be warned against the iniquity of Sodom; but, not taking the warning, they were made as like to Sodom in ruin as they had been in sin.

2. The reason of it is enquired into, and assigned.

1. It would be enquired into by the generations to come, ver. 22. who would find the state of their nation in all respects the reverse of what it had been; and when they read both the history and the promise, would be astonished at the change. The stranger likewise, and the nations about them, as well as particular persons, would ask, *Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land?* ver. 24. Great desolations are thus represented elsewhere as striking the spectators with amazement, 1 Kings ix. 8, 9. *Jer. xxii. 8, 9*. It was time for the neighbours to tremble, when judgment thus began at the house of God, 1 Pet. iv. 17. The emphasis of the question is to be laid upon this land; the land of Canaan; this good land, the glory of all lands; this land flowing with milk and honey: A thousand pities that a good land as this should be made desolate; but that is not all; it is this holy land; the land of Israel, a people in covenant with God; it is Emmanuel's land; a land where God was known and worshipped, and yet thus wasted. Note, 1. It is no new thing for God to bring desolating judgments upon a people that in profession are near to him, *Amos iii. 2*. 2. He never doth this, but there is a good reason why and wherefore he doth it. 3. It concerns us to enquire into the reason, that we may give glory to God, and take warning to ourselves.

2. The reason is here assigned, in answer to that enquiry. The matter would be so plain, that all men would say, It was because they forsook the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, ver. 25. Note, God never forsakes any till they first forsake him: But those that desert the God of their fathers, are justly cast out of the inheritance of their fathers. They went and served other gods, ver. 25. gods that they had no acquaintance with, nor lay under any obligation to, either in duty or gratitude; for god had not given the creatures to be served by us, but to serve us; nor had they done any good to us, (as some read it) more than what God enabled them to do; to the Creator therefore we are debtors, and not to the creatures. It was for this that God was angry with them, ver. 27. and rooted them out in anger, ver. 28. So that how dreadful forever the desolation was, the Lord was righteous in it, which is acknowledged, *Dan. iv. 11, 12*. Thus (saith Mr. Ainsworth) the law of Moses leaves sinners under the curse, and rooted out of the Lord's land; but grace in Christ towards penitent believing sinners, plants them again upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up, being kept by the power of God, *Amos ix. 15*.

Lastly, He concludes his prophecy of the Jews' rejection, just as St. Paul concludes his discourse on the same subject when it began to be fulfilled, *Rom. xii. 33*. *How unsearchable are God's judgments, and his ways past finding out!* So here, ver. 29. *Secret things belong to the Lord our God*. Some make it to be one sentence, *The secret things of the Lord our God are revealed to us and to our children*, as far as we are concerned to know them, and he hath not dealt so with other nations: But we make it two sentences, by which,

1. We are forbidden curiously to enquire into the secret counsels of God, and to determine concerning them. A full answer is given to that question, *Wherefore has the Lord done thus to this land?* sufficient to justify God and admonish us: But if any ask farther why God would be at such a vast expence of miracles to form such a people, whose apostacy and ruin he plainly foresaw? Why he did not by his almighty grace prevent it? Or what he intends yet to do with them? Let such know that these are questions that cannot be answered, and therefore are not fit to be asked. It is presumption in us to pry into the *Arcana Imperii*, and to enquire into the reasons of state which it is not for us to know. See *Acts i. 7*. and *John xxi. 22*. Col. ii. 19.

2. We are directed and encouraged diligently to enquire into that which God has made known; things revealed belong to us and to our children. Note, 1. Though God has kept much of his counsel secret, yet there is enough revealed to satisfy and save us. He has kept back nothing that is profitable for us, but only that which it is good for us to be ignorant of. 2. We ought to acquaint ourselves, and our children too, with the things of God that are revealed; we are not only allowed to search into them, but are concerned to do so, they are things in which we and ours are nearly interested: they are the rules we are to live by, the grants we are to live upon; and therefore we are to learn them diligently ourselves, and to teach them diligently to our children. 3. All our knowledge must be in order to practice, for this is the end of all divine revelation, not to furnish us with curious subjects of speculation and discourse, with which to entertain ourselves and our friends, but that we may do all the words of this law, and be blessed in our deed.

C H A P. XXX.

One would have thought the threatenings in the close of the foregoing chapter had made a full end of the people of Israel, and had left their cause for ever desperate; but, in this chapter, we have a plain intimation of the mercy God had in store for them in the latter days so that mercy at length rejoiceth against judgment, and has the last word. Here we have, 1. Exceeding great and precious promises made to them upon their repentance and return to God, ver. 1—10. 2. The righteousness

righteousness of faith set before them in the plainness and easiness of the commandment that was now given them, ver. 11—14. 3. A fair reference of the whole matter to their choice, ver. 15—20.

1. **AND** it shall come to pass when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee. 2. And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice, according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul: 3. That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. 4. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee. 5. And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it: and he will do thee good and multiply thee above thy fathers. 6. And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul that thou mayest live. 7. And the LORD thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee. 8. And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day. 9. And the LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers. 10. If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God to keep his commandments, and his statutes, which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul.

Two ways these verses may be considered; either as a conditional promise, or as an absolute prediction.

1. They are chiefly to be considered as an addition promise, and so they belong to all persons and all people, and not to Israel only; and the design of them is to assure us, that the greatest sinners, if they repent and be converted, shall have their sins pardoned and be restored to God's favour. This is the purport of the covenant of grace, it leaves room for repentance in case of misdemeanor, and promisseth pardon upon repentance, which the covenant of innocency did not. Now observe here,

1. How the repentance is described, which is the condition of these promises. 1. It begins in *serious consideration*, ver. 1. thou shalt call to mind that which thou hast forgotten or not regarded. Note, Consideration is the first step towards conversion *Isa. xli. 8. Bring to mind, O ye transgressors.* The prodigal son came to himself first, and then to his father. That which they should call to mind is the blessing and the curse. If sinners would but seriously consider the happiness they have lost by sin, and the misery they have brought themselves into, and that by repentance they may escape that misery, and recover that happiness, they would not delay to return to the Lord their God. The prodigal called to mind the blessing and the curse, when he considered his present poverty, and the plenty of bread in his father's house, Luke vi. 17. 2. It consists in sincere conversion. The effect of the consideration cannot but be godly sorrow and shame, *Ezek. vi. 9.—vii. 16.* But that which is the life and soul of repentance, and without which the most passionate expressions are but a jest, is *returning to the Lord our God*, ver. 2. If thou turn, (ver. 10.) with all thy heart and with all thy soul. We must return to our allegiance to God as our lord and ruler, our dependance upon him as our father and benefactor, our devotedness to him as our highest end, and our communion with him as our God in covenant. We must return to God from all that which stands in opposition to him, or competition with him. In this return to God we must be upright, with the heart and soul, and universal, with all the heart and all the soul. 3. It is evidenced by a constant obedience to the holy will of God. If thou shalt obey his voice, ver. 2. thou and thy children, for it is not enough that we do our duty ourselves, but we must train up and engage our children to do it. Or, this comes in as the condition of the entail of the blessing upon their children, provided their children be kept close to their duty. This obedience must be with an eye to God, thou shalt obey his voice, ver. 8. and hearken to that, ver. 10. It must be sincere and cheerful and entire, with all thy heart and with all thy soul, ver. 2. It must be from a principle of love, and that love too must be with all thy heart and with all thy soul, ver. 6. It is the heart and soul that God looks and requires; he will have that or nothing, and entire or not at all. And it must be universal; according to all that I command thee, ver. 2. and again, ver. 8. to do all his commandments. For he that allows himself in the breach of one commandment, involves himself in the guilt of contemning them all, *James ii. 10.* An upright heart has respect to all God's commandments, *Psal. cxix. 6.*

2. What the favour is which is promised upon this repentance. Though they are brought to God by their trouble and distress, in the nations whither they are driven, ver. 1. yet God will graciously accept of them notwithstanding; for on this errand afflictions are sent, to bring us to repentance. Though they are driven out to the utmost parts of heaven, yet from thence their penitent prayers shall reach God's gracious ear, and there his favour shall find them out, ver. 4. *Undique ad cælos tantundem est via.* This promise Nehemiah pleads in his prayer for dispersed Israel, *Neh. i. 9.*

It is here promised, 1. That God would have compassion upon them, as proper objects of his pity, ver. 3. Against sinners that go on in sin God has indignation, chap. xxix. 20. but on those that repent and bemoan themselves he has compassion, *Jer. xxxi. 18—20.* True penitents may take great encouragement from the compassions and tender mercies of our God, which never fail, but overflow. 2. That he would turn their captivity, and gather them from the nations whither they were scattered, ver. 3. though ever

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to remote, ver. 4. One of the Chaldee paraphrasts applies this to the Messiah, explaining it thus, *The word of the Lord shall gather you by the hand of Elias the great priest, and shall bring you by the hand of the king Messiah; for that was God's covenant with him, that he should restore the preserved of Israel, Isa. xlix. 6.* And this the design of his death, to gather into one the children of God that were scattered abroad, *John xi. 51, 52.* To him shall the gathering of the people be. 3. That he would bring them into their land again, ver. 5. Note, Penitent sinners are not only delivered out of their misery, but restored to true happiness in the favour of God. The land they are brought into to possess it, is, though not the same, yet in some respects better than that which our first father Adam possessed, and out of which he was expelled. 4. That he would do them good, ver. 5. and rejoice over them for good, ver. 9. For there is joy in heaven upon the repentance and conversion of sinners; the father of the prodigal rejoiced over him for good. That he would multiply them, ver. 5. And that when they grew numerous every mouth might have meat, he would make them plenteous in every work of their hand, ver. 9. National repentance and reformation bring national plenty, peace, and prosperity. It is promised, *the Lord will make thee plenteous*, in the fruit of thy cattle and land, for good. Many have plenty for hurt, the prosperity of fools destroys them. Then it is for good, when with it God gives us grace to use it for his glory. 5. That he would transfer the curses they had been under to their enemies, ver. 7. When God was gathering them in to re-establish them, they would meet with much opposition; but the same curses that had been a burden upon them should become a defence to them, by being turned upon their adversaries. The cup of trembling should be taken out of their hand, and put into the hand of those that afflicted them, *Isa. li. 22, 23.* 6. That he would give them his grace to change their hearts and rule there, ver. 6. The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart to love the Lord. Note, (1.) The heart must be circumcised to love God. The filth of the flesh must be put away; and the foolishness of the heart, as the Chaldee paraphrase expounds it. See *Col. ii. 11, 12. Rom. ii. 29.* Circumcision was a seal of the covenant; the heart is then circumcised to love God, when it is strongly engaged and held by that bond to his duty. (2.) It is the work of God's grace to circumcise the heart, and to shed abroad the love of God there; and this grace is given to all that repent, and seek it carefully. Nay, that seems to be rather a promise than a precept, ver. 8. Thou shalt return and obey the voice of the Lord. He that requires us to return, promisseth grace to enable us to return; and it is our fault if that grace be not effectual. Herein the covenant of grace is well ordered, that whatsoever is required in the covenant is promised. Turn ye at my reproof: Behold I will pour out my spirit, *Prov. i. 23.* Lastly, It is observable how Moses here calls God, *The Lord thy God*, twelve times in these ten verses, intimating, 1. That penitents may take direction and encouragement in their return to God from their relation to him, *Jer. iii. 22. Behold, we came unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God;* therefore to thee we are bound to come, whither else shall we go; and therefore we hope to find favour with thee. 2. That those who have revolted from God, if they return to him, and do their first works, shall be restored to their former state of honour and happiness. Bring hither the first robe. In the threatenings of the former chapter, he is all along called the Lord, a God of power and the judge of all; but in the promises of this chapter, *the Lord thy God*, a God of grace, and in covenant with thee.

2. This may also be considered as a prediction of the repentance and reformation of the Jews. When all these things are come upon thee, ver. 1. The blessing first, and after that the curse, then the mercy in reserve shall take place. Though their hearts were wretchedly hardened, yet the grace of God could soften and change them; and then, though their case was deplorably miserable, the providence of God would redress all their grievances. Now, 1. It is certain this was fulfilled in their return from their captivity in Babylon. It was a wonderful instance of their repentance and reformation, that Ephraim, who had been joined to idols, renounced them, and said, *What have I to do any more with idols?* That captivity effectually cured them of idolatry; and then God planted them again in their own land, and did them good. But, 2. Some think it is yet further to be accomplished in the conversion of the Jews that are now dispersed, their repentance for the sin of their fathers in crucifying Christ, their return to God through him, and their accession to the Christian Church. But, alas, who shall live when God doth this?

11. ¶ For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. 12. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us that we may hear it and do it? 13. Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? 14. But the word is very nigh unto thee in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that thou mayest do it.

Moses here urges them to obedience from the consideration of the plainness and easiness of the command.

1. This is true of the law of Moses. They could never plead in excuse of their disobedience, that God had enjoined them that which was either unintelligible, or impracticable, impossible to be known or to be done, ver. 11. It is not hidden from thee, That is, (1.) It is not too high for thee; thou needest not send messengers to heaven, ver. 12. to enquire what thou must do to please God; nor needest thou go beyond sea, ver. 12. as the philosophers did, that travelled through many and distant regions in pursuit of learning; no, thou art not put to that labour and expence; nor is the commandment within the reach of those only that have a great estate or a refined genius, but it is very nigh unto thee, ver. 14. It is written in your books, made upon plain tables, so that he that runs may read it; your priests lips keep this knowledge, and when any difficulty ariseth, you may ask the law at their mouth, *Mal. ii. 7.* It is not communicated in a strange language; but it is in thy mouth, i. e. in the vulgar tongue that is commonly used among you, in which you may hear it read, and talk of it familiarly among your children. It is not wrapt up in obscure phrases and figures to puzzle and amuse you, or in hieroglyphics, but it is in thy heart; it is delivered in such a manner, as that it is level to thy capacity, even to the capacity of the meanest. (3.) It is not too hard nor heavy for thee; so the Septuagint reads it, ver. 11. Thou needest not say, as good attempt to climb to heaven, or flee upon the wings of the morning to the uttermost parts of the sea, as go about to do all the words of this law: no, the matter is not so; it is no such intolerable yoke as some ill-minded people represent it. It was indeed a heavy yoke in comparison with that of Christ, *Acts xv. 10.* but not in comparison with the idolatrous services of the neighbour nations. God appeals to themselves that he had not made them to serve with an offering, nor wearied them with incense, *Isa. xliii. 20. Mic. vi. 3.* But he speaks especially

cially of the moral law, and the precepts of that, that is very nigh thee, consonant to the law of nature, which would have been found in every man's heart, and every man's mouth, if he would but have attended to it. There is that in thee which *consents to the law that is good*, Rom. vii. 18. Thou hast therefore no reason to complain of any insuperable difficulty in the observance of it.

2. This is true of the gospel of Christ to which the apostle applies it, and makes it the language of the *righteousness which is of faith*, Rom. x. 6, 7, 8. And many think it is principally intended by Moses here: for he wrote of Christ, John v. 46. This is God's commandment now under the gospel, that we believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ, 1 John iii. 23. If we ask as the blind man did, *Lord, who is he?* or where is he, that we may believe on him; John ix. 36. This scripture gives an answer, We need not go up to heaven, to fetch him thence, for he is come down from thence in his incarnation; nor down to the deep to fetch him thence, for thence he is come up in his resurrection. But the word is nigh us, and Christ in that word: so that if we believe in the heart that the promises of the incarnation and resurrection of the Messiah are fulfilled in our Lord Jesus, and receive him accordingly, and confess him with our mouth, we have then Christ with us, and we shall be saved. He is near, very near, that justifies us. This law was plain and easy, but the gospel much more so.

15. ¶ See I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil: 16. In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes, and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. 17. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them: 18. I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land whither thou passest over Jordan, to go to possess it. 19. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live. 20. That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him (for he is thy life, and the length of thy days) that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob to give them.

Moses here concludes with a very bright light, and a very strong fire, that, if possible, what he had been preaching of might find entrance into the understanding and affections of this unthinking people. What could be said more moving, and more likely to make deep and lasting impressions? The manner of his treating with them is so rational, so prudent, so affectionate, and every way so apt to gain the point, that it abundantly shews him to be in earnest, and leaves them inexcusable to their disobedience.

1. He states the case very fairly. He appeals to themselves concerning it, whether he had not laid the matter as plain as they could wish before them. (1.) Every man covets to obtain life and good, and to escape death and evil; desires happiness, and dreads misery, well, saith he, I have shewed you the way to obtain all the happiness you can desire, and to avoid all misery. Be obedient and all shall be well, and nothing amiss. Our first parents ate the forbidden fruit in hopes of getting thereby the knowledge of good and evil; but it was a miserable knowledge they got of good by the loss of it; and of evil by the sense of it; yet such is the compassion of God toward man, that instead of giving him up to his own delusions, he has favoured him by his word with such a knowledge of good and evil, as will make him for ever happy, if it be not his own fault. (2.) Every man is moved and governed in his actions by hope and fear, hope of good and fear of evil, real or apparent. Now, saith Moses, I have tried both ways, if you will be either drawn to obedience by the certain prospect of advantage by it, or driven to obedience by the no less certain prospect of ruin in case you be disobedient; if you will be wrought upon either way, you will be kept close to God and your duty; but if you are not you are utterly inexcusable.

Let us then hear the conclusion of the whole matter. (1.) If they and theirs would love God and serve him, they should live and be happy, ver. 16. If they would love God, and evidence the sincerity of their love by keeping his commandments; if they would make conscience of keeping his commandments, and do it from a principle of love, then God would do them good, and they should be as happy as his love and blessing could make them. (2.) If they or theirs should at any time turn from God, desert his service, and worship other gods, that would certainly be their ruin, ver. 17, 18. Observe, It is not for every failure in the particulars of their duty, that ruin is threatened, but for apostasy and idolatry; though every violation of the command deserved the curse, yet the nation would be destroyed by that only which is the violation of the marriage-covenant. The purport of the New Testament is much the same; that in like manner sets before us life and death; good and evil: *He that believes shall be saved: he that believes not shall be damned*, Mark xvi. 16. And that faith includes love and obedience. To them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, God will give eternal life. But to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, and so, in effect, worship other gods and serve them, to them will be rendered the indignation and wrath of an immortal God, the consequence of which must needs be the tribulation and anguish of an immortal soul, Rom. ii. 7, 8, 9.

2. Having thus stated the case, he fairly puts them to their choice, with a direction to them to choose well. He appeals to heaven and earth concerning his fair and faithful dealing with them, ver. 19. They could not but own, that whatever was the issue, he had delivered his soul, therefore that duty which would be their life. Note, 1. Those shall have life that choose it: they that choose the favour of God, and communion with him for their felicity, and prosecute their choice as they ought, shall have what they choose. 2. Those that come short of life and happiness, must thank themselves; they had had it, if they had chosen it, when they were put to their choice: but they die because they will die: that is, because they do not like the life promised, upon the terms proposed.

In the last verse, (1.) He shews them, in short, what their duty is, to love God, and to love him as the Lord, a Being most amiable, and as their God, a

God in covenant with them; and as an evidence of his love, to obey his voice in every thing, and by a constancy of this love and obedience to cleave to him, and never to forsake him in affection or practice. (2.) He shews them what reason there was for this duty. In consideration, 1. Of their dependance upon God: *he is thy life, and the length of thy days*. He gives life, preserves life, restores life, and prolongs it by his power, though it be a frail life: and by his patience, though it be a forfeited life: he sweetens life with his comforts, and is the sovereign lord of life; *in his hand our breath is*. Therefore we are concerned to keep ourselves in his love; for it is good having him our friend, and bad having him our enemy. 2. Of their obligation to him for the promise of Canaan made to their fathers, and ratified with an oath. And, 3. Of their expectations from him in performance of that promise; Love God and serve him, that thou mayest dwell in the land of promise, which thou mayest be sure he can give, and uphold to thee, who is *thy life and the length of thy days*. All these are arguments to us to continue in love and obedience to the God of our mercies.

C H A P. XXXI.

In this chapter Moses having finished his sermon, (1.) Encourageth both the people, who were now to enter Canaan, ver. 1—6. and Joshua who was to lead them, ver. 7, 8—23. And (2.) He takes care for the keeping of these things always in their remembrance after his decease. 1. By the book of the law which was, 1. Written. 2. Delivered into the custody of the priests, ver. 9. and 24—27. 3. Ordered to be publicly read every seventh year, ver. 10—13. 2. By a song which God orders Moses to prepare for their instruction and admonition. 1. He calls Moses and Joshua to the door of the tabernacle, ver. 14, 15. 2. He foretells to them the apostasy of Israel in process of time, and the judgments they would thereby bring upon themselves, ver. 16—18. 3. He prescribes the following song to be a witness against them, ver. 19—21. 4. Moses wrote it, ver. 22. And delivered it to Israel with an intimation of the design of it, as he had received it from the Lord, ver. 28—30.

1. **A**ND Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel. 2. And he said unto them, I am an hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: also the LORD hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan. 3. The LORD thy God he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them: and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the LORD hath said. 4. And the LORD shall do unto them as he did to Sihon, and to Og, kings of the Amorites, and unto the land of them, whom he destroyed. 5. And the LORD shall give them up before your face, that he may do unto them according unto all the commandments which I have commanded you. 6. Be strong and of good courage, fear not nor be afraid of them; for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. 7. And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. 8. And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee, he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee; fear not, neither be dismayed.

Loth to part (we say) bids oft farewell: Moses doth so to the children of Israel; not because he was loth to go to God, but because he was loth to leave them, fearing, that when he had left them, they would leave God; he had finished what he had to say to them by way of counsel and exhortation: here he calls them together to give them a word of encouragement, especially with reference to the wars of Canaan, they were now to engage in. It was a discouragement to them that Moses was to be removed, at a time when he could so ill be spared: though Joshua was continued to fight for them in the valley, they would want Moses to intercede for them on the hill, as he did, Exod. xvii. 10. But there is no remedy; *Moses can no more go out and come in*, ver. 2. Not that he was disabled by any decay either of body or mind; for his natural force was not abated, chap. xxxiv. 7. But he cannot any longer discharge his office: For, 1. He is an hundred and twenty years old, and it is time for him to think of resigning his honour, and returning to his rest. He that had arrived at so great an age then, when seventy or eighty was the ordinary stint, as appears by the prayer of Moses, Psal. xc. 10. might well think he had accomplished as a hireling his day. 2. He is under a divine sentence, *Thou shalt not go over Jordan*. Thus a full stop was put to his usefulness; hitherto he must go, hitherto he must serve, but no farther. So God had appointed it, and Moses acquiesced: for I know not why we should any of us desire to live a day longer than while God has work for us to do, nor shall we be accountable for more time than is allotted us. But though Moses must not go over himself, he is in care to encourage those that must.

1. He encourageth the people: and never could any general animate his soldiers upon such good grounds, as Moses here encourageth Israel. 1. He assures them of the constant presence of God with them, ver. 3. *The Lord thy God that has led thee and kept thee hitherto, he will go over before thee*; and they might follow boldly, who were sure that they had God for their leader. He repeats it again, ver. 6. with an emphasis *The Lord thy God, the great Jehovah, who is thine in covenant, he it is, he and no less; he and no other that goes before thee*, not only that by his promise has assured thee that he will go before thee; but by his ark, the visible tokens of his presence, shews thee that he doth actually go before thee. And he repeats it with enlargement, not only he goes before thee at first, to set thee in, but will continue with thee all along, with thee and thine, *he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee*; he will not disappoint thy expectations in any strait, nor will he ever desert thine interest. Be constant to him, and he will be so to thee; this is applied by the apostle to all God's spiritual Israel, for the encouragement of their faith and hope; unto us is this gospel preached,

as well as unto them, *He will never fail thee, nor forsake thee*, Heb. xiii. 5. 2. He commends Joshua to them for a leader; *Joshua, he shall go over before thee*, ver. 3. One whose conduct and courage, and sincere affection to their interest, they had had long experience of; and one whom God had ordained and appointed to be their leader, and therefore no doubt would own and bless, and make a great blessing to them. See *Numb. xxvii. 18*. Note, It is a great encouragement to a people, when instead of some useful instruments that are removed, God raiseth up others to carry on his works. 3. He insures their success. The greatest generals, supported with the greatest advantages, must yet own the issues of war to be doubtful and uncertain; the battle is not always to the strong, or to the bold; an ill accident unthought of may turn the scale against the highest hopes. But Moses had warrant from God, to assure Israel that, notwithstanding the disadvantages they laboured under, they should certainly be victorious. A coward will fight when he is sure to be conqueror. God undertakes to do the work, *he will destroy these nations*; and Israel shall do little else but divide the spoil, *thou shalt possess them*, ver. 3. Two things might encourage their hopes of this, (1.) The victories they had already obtained over Sihon and Og, ver. 4. From which they might infer both the power of God, that he could do what he had done, and the purpose of God, that he would finish what he had begun to do. Thus must we improve our experience. (2.) The command God had given them to destroy the Canaanites, chap. vii. 2. —xii. 2. to which he refers here, ver. 5. That ye may do unto them according to all which I have commanded you, and from which they might infer, if God had commanded them to destroy the Canaanites, no doubt he would put it into the power of their hands to do it. Note, What God has made our duty, we have reason to expect opportunity and assistance from him for the doing of it. So that from all this he had reason enough to bid them be strong and of a good courage, ver. 6. While they had the power of God engaged for them, they had no reason to fear all the powers of Canaan engaged against them.

2. He encourageth Joshua, ver. 7, 8. Observe, 1. Though Joshua was an experienced general, and a man of approved gallantry and resolution, and that had already signalized himself in many brave actions, yet Moses saw cause to bid him be of good courage now he was entering upon a new action; and Joshua was far from taking it as an affront, or an implicit questioning of his courage to be thus charged, as sometimes we find proud and peevish spirits invidiously taking exhortations and admonitions for reproaches and reflections. Joshua himself is very well pleased to be admonished by Moses to be strong and of good courage. 3. He gives him this charge *in the sight of all Israel*, that they might be the more observant of him whom they saw thus solemnly inaugurated, and that he might set himself the more to be an example of courage to the people, who were witnesses to this charge here given to him, as well as to themselves. 3. He gives him the same assurances of the divine presence, and consequently of a glorious success, that he had given his people. God would be with him, would not forsake him, and therefore he would certainly accomplish the glorious enterprise for which he was called and commissioned, *thou shalt call them to inherit the land of promise*. Note, Those shall speed well that have God with them; and therefore they ought to be of good courage. Through God let us do valiantly, for through him we shall do victoriously; if we resist the devil he shall flee, and God shall shortly tread him under our feet.

9. ¶ And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and unto all the elders of Israel. 10. And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, 11. When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. 12. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and the stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: 13. And that their children which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.

The law was given by Moses; so it is said, *John i. 17*. He was not only intrusted to deliver it to that generation, but to transmit it to the generations to come; and here it appears that he was faithful to that trust.

1. *Moses wrote this law*, ver. 9. The learned bishop Patrick understands this of all the five books of Moses, which are often called the Law; though he supposeth that Moses had written most of the Pentateuch before, yet he did not finish it till now; now he put his last hand to that sacred volume. Many think, that the law here, (especially since it is called this law, this grand abridgement of the law) is to be understood of this book of Deuteronomy; all these discourses to the people, which have taken up this whole book, he being in them divinely inspired, wrote them as the word of God. He wrote this law, (1.) That they that had heard it might often review it themselves, and call it to mind. (2.) That it might be the more safely handed down to posterity. Note, The church has received abundance of advantage by the writing as well as by the preaching of divine things: faith comes not only by hearing, but by reading. The same care that was taken of the law, thanks be to God, is taken of the gospel too: soon after it was preached it was written, that it might reach to them on whom the ends of the world shall come.

2. Having written it, he committed it to the care and custody of the priests and elders. He delivered one authentic copy to the priests, to be laid up in the ark, ver. 26. there to remain as a standard by which all other copies must be tried: and it is supposed to the elders of each tribe he gave another copy, to be transcribed by all that were so disposed of that tribe. Some observe that the elders as well as the priests, were intrusted with the law, to intimate, that magistrates by their power, as well as ministers by their doctrine, are to maintain religion, and to take care that the law be not broken or lost.

3. He appointed the public reading of this law in a general assembly of all Israel every seventh year. The pious Jews (it is very likely) read the law daily to their families, and *Moses of old time was read in the synagogue every sabbath-day*, Acts xv. 21. But once in seven years, that the law might be the more magnified and made honourable, it must be read in a general assembly. Though we read the word in private, we must not think it needless to hear it read in public.

Now here he gives direction,

1. When this solemn reading of the law must be, that the time might add to the solemnity; it must be done, (1.) In the year of release. In that year the land rested, so that they could the better spare time to attend this service. Servants who were then discharged, and poor debtors who were then acquitted from their debts, must know, that having the benefit of the law, it was justly expected they should yield obedience to it; and therefore give up themselves to be God's servants, because he had loosed their bonds. The year of release was typical of gospel grace, which is therefore called the *acceptable year of the Lord*; for the remission and liberty by Christ engageth us to keep his commandments, Luke i. 74, 75. (2.) At the feast of tabernacles in that year. In that feast they were particularly required to rejoice before God; Lev. xxiii. 40. Therefore then we must read the law, both to qualify their mirth, and keep it in due bounds, and to sanctify their mirth, that they might make the law of God the matter of their rejoicing, and might read it with pleasure, and not as a task.

2. To whom it must be read; to all Israel, ver. 11. men, women, and children, and the strangers, ver. 12. The women and children were not obliged to go up to the other feasts, but to this only in which the law was read. Note, It is the will of God that all people should acquaint themselves with his word. It is a rule to all, and therefore should be read to all. It is supposed that since all Israel could not possibly meet in one place, or one man's voice could not reach them all, that as many as the courts of the Lord's house would hold met there, and the rest at the same time in their synagogues. The Jewish doctors say that the hearers were bound to prepare their hearts and to hear with fear and reverence, and with joy and trembling, as in the day when the law was given on mount Sinai; and though they were great and wise men, which knew the whole law very well, yet they were bound to hear with great attention; for he that reads is the messenger of the congregation to carry the words of God to be heard. I wish those that hear the gospel read and preached would consider this.

3. By whom it be read. *Thou shalt read it*, ver. 11. Thou, O Israel, by a proper person appointed for that purpose; or thou, O Joshua, their chief ruler; accordingly we find he did read the law himself, *Josh. viii. 35*. So did Josiah, 2 *Chron. xxxiv. 30*. and Ezra, *Neh. viii. 3*. And the Jews say that the king himself (when they had one) was the person that read in the courts of the temple; that a pulpit was set up for that purpose in the midst of the court, in which the king stood, that the book of the law was delivered him by the high-priest, he stood up to receive it, uttered a prayer, (as every one did that was to read the law in public) before he read; and then, if he pleased, he might sit down and read. But if he read standing, it was thought the more commendable, as (they say) King Agrippa did. Here let me offer it as a conjecture, that Solomon is called the Preacher, in his Ecclesiastics, because he delivered the substance of that book in a discourse to the people, after his public reading of the law, at the feast of tabernacles, according to this appointment here.

4. For what end it must be thus solemnly read. (1.) That the present generation might hereby keep up their acquaintance with the law of God, ver. 12. They must hear, that they may learn; and fear God and observe to do their duty. See here what we are to aim at in hearing the word; we must hear that we may learn and grow in knowledge, and every time we read the scriptures, we shall find there is still more and more to be learned out of them. We must learn that we may fear God, i. e. that we may be duly affected with divine things; and must fear God, that we may observe and do the words of the law; for in vain do we pretend to fear him, if we do not obey him. (2.) That the rising generation might be times be leavened with religion, ver. 13. not only that those who know something may thus know more, but that the children which have not known any thing may be times know this, how much it is their interest as well as duty to fear God.

14. ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation. 15. And the LORD appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud: and the pillar of a cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle. 16. ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant, which I have made with them. 17. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us? 18. And I will surely hide my face in that day, for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods. 19. Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel; put it into their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel. 20. For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers that I floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then they will turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant. 21. And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness: for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now before I have brought them into the land which I swore.

Here, 1. Moses and Joshua are summoned to attend the divine majesty at the door of the tabernacle, ver. 14. Moses is told again that he must shortly

shortly die; even those that are most ready and willing to die have need to be often minded of its approach. In consideration of this he must come himself meet to God, for whatever improves our communion with God, furthers our preparation for death. He must also bring Joshua with him to be presented to God for a successor, and to receive his commission and charge. Moses readily obeys the summons, for he was none of those that look with an evil eye upon their successors, but on the contrary, rejoiced in him.

3. God graciously gives them the meeting. *He appeared in the tabernacle*, (as the Shechinah used to appear) *in a pillar of a cloud*, ver. 15. This is the only time in all this book that we find the glory of God appearing as it often did in the three foregoing books: which perhaps signifies that in the latter days under the evangelical law such visible appearances as these of the divine glory are not to be expected, but we must take heed to the more sure word of prophecy.

3. He tells Moses that after his death the covenant which he had taken so much pains to make between Israel and their God would certainly be broken. (1.) That Israel would *forsake God*, ver. 16. And we may be sure if the covenant between God and man be broken, the blame must lie on man, it is he that breaks it; we have often observed it, That God never leaves any till they first leave him. Worshipping the gods of the Canaanites, (who had been the natives, but from henceforwards were to be looked upon as the strangers of that land) would undoubtedly be counted a deserting of God, and, like idolatry, a violation of the covenant. Thus still those are revolters from Christ, and will be so adjudged, who either make a god of their money by reigning covetousness, or a god of their belly by reigning sensuality. They that *turn to other gods*, ver. 18. forsake their own mercies. This apostacy of theirs is foretold to be an effect of their prosperity, ver. 20. *They shall have eaten and filled themselves*, that is all they will aim at in eating, to gratify their own appetites and then they will wax fat, grow secure and sensual; their security will take off the dread of God and his judgments, and their sensuality will incline them to the idolatries of the heathen, which *made provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts of it*. Note, God has a clear and infallible foresight of all the wickedness of the wicked, and hath often covenanted with those who *he knew would deal very treacherously*, Isa. xlviii. 8. and conferred many favours on those who he knew would deal very ungratefully.

(2.) That then God would forsake Israel; and justly doth he cast them off who had so unjustly cast him off, ver. 17. *My anger shall be kindled against them, and I will forsake them*. His providence would forsake them, no longer to protect and prosper them, and then they would become a prey to all their neighbours: his spirit and grace would forsake them, no longer to teach and guide them, and then they would be more and more bigoted, besotted, and hardened in their idolatries. Thus *many evils and troubles would befall them*, ver. 17—21. which would be such manifest indications of God's displeasure against them, that they themselves would be constrained to own it, *Art not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?* They that have sinned away their God, will find that thereby they pull all mischief upon their own heads. But that which completed their misery was, that God would *hide his face from them in that day*, that day of their trouble and distress, ver. 18. Whatever outward troubles were in, if we have but the light of God's countenance, we may be easy. But if God hide his face from us and our prayers we are undone.

4. He directs Moses to deliver them a song, in the composing of which he should be divinely inspired, and which should remain a standing testimony for God as faithful to them in giving them warning, ver. 19. The written word in general, as well as the song in particular, is a witness for God, against all those that break covenant with him. *It shall be for a testimony*, Matt. xxiv. 14. The wisdom of man has devised many ways of conveying the knowledge of good and evil, by laws, histories, prophecies, proverbs, and among the rest, by songs; each have their advantages. And the wisdom of God has in the scripture made use of them all, that ignorant and careless men might be left inexcusable, (1.) This song, if rightly improved, might be a means to prevent their apostacy, for in the inditing of it God had an eye, to their present imagination, now, *before they were brought into the land of promise*, ver. 21. God knew very well that there were in their hearts such gross conceits of the deity, and such inclinations to idolatry, that they should be tinder to the sparks of that temptation, and therefore in this song gives them warning of their danger that way. Note, The word of God is a *discerner of the thoughts and intents of men's hearts*, and meets with them strangely by its reproofs and corrections, Heb. iv. 12. Compare 1 Cor. xiv. 25. Ministers who preach the word know not the imaginations men go about, but God, whose word it is, knows it very well. (2.) If this song did not prevent their apostacy yet it might help to bring them to repentance, and to reduce them from their apostacy when their troubles were come upon them, *this song shall not be forgotten*, but may serve as a glass to shew them their own faces, that they may humble themselves, and return to him from whom they have revolted. Note, Those whom God has mercy in store for, he may leave them to fall, yet he will provide means for their recovery. Medicines are prepared beforehand for their cure.

22. ¶ Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel. 23. And he gave Joshua the son of Nuna charge, and said, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore unto them: and I will be with thee. 24. ¶ And it came to pass when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished; 25. That Moses commanded the Levites which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, 26. Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee. 27. For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD: and how much more after my death? 28. Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them. 29. For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you: and evil will befall you in the latter days, because ye will do

evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands. 30. And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song until they were ended.

Here, 1. The charge is given to Joshua, which God had said, ver. 14. he would give him. The same in effect that Moses had given him, ver. 7. *Be strong and of good courage*, ver. 23. Joshua had now heard from God so much of the wickedness of the people whom he was to have the conduct of as could not but be a discouragement to him; nay, faith God, how bad soever they are, thou shalt go through thy undertaking, for *I will be with thee*. Thou shalt put them into possession in Canaan, if they afterwards by their sin throw themselves out of it again, that will be no fault of thine nor any dishonour to thee, therefore *be of good courage*.

2. The solemn delivery of the book of the law to the Levites to be deposited in the side of the ark is here again related, ver. 24, 25, 26. of which before, ver. 9. Only they are here directed where to treasure up this precious original, not in the ark, there only the two tables were preserved, but in another box *by the side of the ark*. It is probable, this was the very book that was found in the house of the Lord, (having been somehow or other misplaced) in the days of Josiah, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 14. and so perhaps the following words here, *that it may be a witness against thee*, may particularly point at that event which happened so long after; for the finding of this very book occasioned by the public reading of it by Josiah himself, for a witness against a people who were then almost ripe for their ruin by the Babylonians.

3. The song which follows in the next chapter is here delivered to Moses, and by him to the people. He wrote it first, ver. 22. as the Spirit of God indited it, and then *spoke it in the ears of all the congregation*, ver. 30. and taught it them, ver. 22. i. e. gave out copies of it, and ordered the people to learn it by heart.

It was delivered by word of mouth at first, and afterwards in writing to the elders and officers, as the representatives of their respective tribes, ver. 28. by them to be transmitted to their several families and households. It is delivered to them with a solemn appeal to heaven and earth, concerning the fair warning which was given them by it, of the fatal consequences of their apostacy from God; and with a declaration of the little joy and little hope Moses had in and concerning them.

1. He declares what little joy he had had of them while he was with them, ver. 27. It is not in a passion that he saith, *I know thy rebellion*, (as once he said it unadvisedly, *Hear now ye rebels*) but it is the result of a long acquaintance with them, *ye have been rebellious against the Lord*. Their rebellions against himself he makes no mention of, those he had long since forgiven and forgotten; but their rebellions against God, they must be made to hear of, that they may be ever repented of and never repeated.

2. What little hopes he had of them now he was leaving them. From what God had now said to him, ver. 16. more than from his own experience of them, though that was discouraging enough, he tells them, ver. 29. *I know that after my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves*. Many a sad thought, no doubt, it occasioned to this good man, to foresee the apostacy and ruin of a people he had taken so much pains with to do them good, and make them happy; but this was his comfort, that he had done his duty, and that God would be glorified, if not in their settlement in their dispersion. Thus our Lord Jesus a little before his death foretold the rise of false christs and false prophets, Matt. xxiv. 25. notwithstanding which, and all the apostacies of the latter times, we may be confident that the *gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church*, for the foundation of God stands sure.

C H A P. XXXII.

In this chapter we have, 1. The song which Moses by the appointment of God, delivered to the children of Israel, for a standing admonition to them, to take heed of forsaking God. This takes up most of the chapter. In which we have, (1.) The preface, ver. 1, 2. (2.) A high character of God, and in opposition to that an ill character of the people of Israel, ver. 3—6. (3.) A rehearsal of the great things God had done for them, and in opposition to that an account of their ill carriage towards him, ver. 17, 18. (4.) A prediction of the wasting, destroying judgments which God would bring upon them for their sins, in which God is here justified by the many aggravations of their impieties, ver. 19—33. (5.) A promise of the destruction of their enemies and oppressors at last, and the glorious deliverance of a remnant of Israel, ver. 34—43. 2. The exhortation with which Moses delivered this song to them, ver. 44—47. The orders God gives to Moses to go up to mount Nebo and dies, ver. 48—52.

1. **G**IVE ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. 2. My doctrine shall drop as the rain; my speech shall distil as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass. 3. Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. 4. He is the rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he. 5. They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children; they are a perverse and crooked generation. 6. Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people, and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made, and established thee?

Here is, 1. A commanding preface or introduction to this song of Moses, ver. 1, 2. He begins (1.) with a common appeal to heaven and earth concerning the truth and importance of what he was about to say, and the justice of the divine proceedings against a rebellious and backsliding people, for he had said, chap. xxxi. 28. that he would in this song call heaven and earth to record against them. The heaven and earth themselves would sooner hear than this perverse and unthinking people, for they revolt not from their obedience to their Creator, but *continue to this day according to his ordinance as his servants*, Psal. cxix. 90, 92. and therefore will rise up in judgment against rebellious Israel. Heaven and earth will be a witness against sinners, witnesses of the warning given them, and of their refusal to take the warning; See Job xx. 27. *the heaven shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall*

shall rise up against him. Or heaven and earth are here put for the inhabitants of both; angels and men; both shall agree to justify God in his proceedings against Israel, and to declare his righteousness, *Plal. l. 6.* See *Rev. xix. 1.* (2.) He begins with a solemn application of what he was about to say to the people, *ver. 2. My doctrine shall drop as the rain.* (1.) It shall be a beating, sweeping rain to the rebellious; for one of the Chaldee paraphrasts expounds the first clause. Rain is sometimes sent for judgment, witness that with which the world was deluged, and so the word of God, as to some it is reviving and refreshing, and a *fiavour of life unto life*; so to others it is terrifying and killing, and a *fiavour of death unto death.* (2.) It shall be as a sweet and comfortable dew to those who are rightly prepared to receive it. Observe, 1. The subject of this song is doctrine; he had given them a song of praise and thanksgiving, *Exod. xv.* but this is a song of instruction, for in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, we are not only to give glory to God, but to *teach and admonish one another*, *Col. iii. 16.* Hence many of David's psalms are intitled *Musical, to give instruction.* 2. This doctrine is fitly compared to rain and showers which come from above, to make the earth fruitful, and *accomplish that for which they are sent*, *Isa. lv. 10, 11.* and depend not upon the wisdom or will of man, *Mic. v. 7.* It is a mercy to have this rain come often upon us, and our duty to *drink it in*, *Heb. vi. 7.* 3. He promised that this doctrine shall drop and distil as the dew, and the small rain, which descends silently and without noise. The word preached is then likely to profit, when it comes gently, and sweetly insinuates itself into the hearts and affection of the hearers. 4. He bespeaks their acceptance and entertainment of it, and that it might be as sweet and pleasant and welcome to them, as rain to the *thirsty earth*, *Plal. lxxii. 6.* And the word of God is then likely to do us good, when it is thus acceptable. 5. The learned Bishop Patrick understands it as a prayer, that his words which were sent from heaven to them, might sink into their hearts and soften them, as the rain doth the earth, and so make them fruitful in obedience.

2. An awful declaration of the greatness and righteousness of God, *ver. 3, 4.* He begins with this, and lays it down as his first principle, (1.) To preserve the honour of God, that no reproach might be cast upon him for the sake of the wickedness of his people Israel: how wicked and corrupt soever they are who are called by his name: he is just and right, and all that is good, and is not to be thought the worse of for their badness. (2.) To aggravate the wickedness of Israel, who knew and worshipped such a holy God, and yet were themselves so unholy. And (3.) To justify God in his dealings with them; we must abide by it that God is righteous, even when his judgments are a great deep, *Jer. xii. 1.*

Moses here sets himself to publish the name of the Lord, *ver. 3.* that Israel, knowing what a God he is whom they had avouched for theirs, might never be such fools as to exchange him for a false god, a dunghill god. He calls upon him therefore to ascribe greatness to him. It will be of great use to us for the preventing of sin, and the preserving of us in the way of our duty, always to keep up high and honourable thoughts of God, and to take all occasions to express them. *Ascribe greatness to our God.* We cannot add to his greatness, for it is infinite; but we must acknowledge it, and give him the glory of it.

Now, when Moses would set forth the greatness of God, he doth it not by explaining the eternity and immensity, or describing the brightness of his glory in the upper world, but by shewing the faithfulness of his word, the perfection of his works, and the wisdom and equity of all the administrations of his government: for in these his glory shines most clear to us, and these are things revealed concerning him, which *belong to us and our children*, *ver. 4.* 1. *He is the rock.* So he is called six times in this chapter, and the LXX all along translate it *God, God.* The learned Mr. Hugh Broughton reckons, that God is called the rock eighteen times (besides in this chapter) in the Old Testament (though in some places we translate it, *strength*) and charges it therefore upon the Papists that they make St. Peter a god, when they make him the rock on which the Church is built. God is the rock, for he is in himself immutable and immovable, and he is to all that seek him and fly to him an impenetrable shelter, and to all that trust in him, an everlasting foundation. 2. *His work is perfect.* His work of creation was so, *all very good*; his works of providence are so, or will be so in due time, and when the mystery of God shall be finished, the perfection of his works will appear to all the world; nothing that God doth can be mended, *Ecc. iii. 14.* God was now perfecting what he had promised and begun for his people Israel, and from the perfection of this work they must take occasion to give him the glory of the perfection of all his works. The best of men's works are imperfect, they have their flaws and defects, and are left unfinished: but, *as for God, his work is perfect*; if he begin he will make an end. 3. *All his ways are judgment.* The ends of his ways are all righteous, and he is wise in the choice of the means, in order to those ends. Judgment signifies both prudence and justice. *The ways of the Lord are right*, *Hos. xiv. 9.* 4. *He is a God of truth*, whose word we may take and rely upon, for he cannot lie, who is faithful to all his promises, nor shall his threatenings fall to the ground. 5. *He is without iniquity*; one who never cheated any that trusted in him, never wronged any that appealed to his justice, nor ever was hard upon any that cast themselves upon his mercy. 6. *Just and right is he.* As he will not wrong any by punishing them more than they deserve, so he will not fail to recompense all those that serve him, or suffer for him. He is indeed just and right; for he will effectually take care that none shall lose by him. Now what a bright and amiable idea doth this one verse give us of the God whom we worship; and what reason have we then to love him and fear him, to live a life of delight in him, dependance on him, and devotedness to him: this is our rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him; nor none can be. *Psal. xcii. 15.*

3. A high charge exhibited against the Israel of God, whose character was in all respects reverse to that of the *God of Israel*, *ver. 5.* (1.) *They have corrupted themselves.* Or, *It has corrupted itself*; the body of the people has; *the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint.* God did not corrupt them, for *just and right is he*; but they are themselves the sole authors of their own sin and ruin; and both are included in this word. *They have debauched themselves*: for every man is tempted when he is drawn away from his own lust. And *they have destroyed themselves*, *Hos. viii. 9.* If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear the guilt and grief, *Prov. ix. 12.* (2.) *Their spot is not the spot of their children.* Even God's children have their spots while they are in this imperfect state; for if we say, we have no sin, no spot, we deceive ourselves. But the sin of Israel was none of those; it was not an infirmity which they strove against, watched and prayed against, but an evil which their hearts were fully set in them to do: For (3.) They were a *perverse and crooked generation*, that were acted by a spirit of contradiction, and therefore would do what was forbidden, because it was forbidden; would set up their own humour and fancy in opposition to the will of God, were impatient of reproof, hated to be reformed, and went on *forwardly in the way of their heart.* The Chaldee paraphrase reads this verse thus; *They have scattered, or changed themselves, and not him; even the children that served idols; a generation that has depraved its own works, and alienated itself.* Idolaters cannot hurt God, nor do any

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damage to his works, or make him a stranger in this world. See *Job xxxv. 6.* No, all the hurt they do, is to themselves and their own works. The learned Bishop Patrick gives another reading of it, *Did he do him any hurt*, i. e. Is God the rock to be blamed for the evils that should befall Israel? No, *His children are their blot*, i. e. All the evil that comes upon them, is the fruit of their children's wickedness; for the whole generation of them is crooked and perverse. All that are ruined, ruin themselves; they die, because they will die.

4. A pathetic exhortation with this provoking people for their ingratitude, *ver. 6.* *Do ye thus requite the Lord?* Surely you will not hereafter be so base and disingenuous in your carriage towards him as you have been. (1.) He minds them of the obligations God had laid upon them to serve him, and to cleave to him. He had been a father to them, had begotten them, fed them, carried them, nursed them, and borne their manners; and would they spurn at the bowels of a father? He had bought them! had been at a vast expence of miracles to bring them out of Egypt; had given men for them, and people for their life, *Isa. xlii. 1.* *Is he not thy father, thy owner?* so some, that has an incontestible propriety in thee, and *thou knowest his owner.* He has made thee, and brought thee into being; established thee, and kept thee in being; has he not done so? Can you deny the engagements you lie under to him, in consideration of the great things he had done and designed for you? And are not our obligations, as baptized Christians, equally great and strong to our Creator that made us, our Redeemer that bought us, and our Sanctifier that hath established us? (2.) From hence he infers the evil of deserting him and rebelling against him. For, 1. It was a base ingratitude. *Do ye thus requite the Lord?* Are these the returns you make him for all his favours to you? The powers you have from him will you employ them against him? See *Micah vi. 3, 4.* *John x. 32.* This is such monstrous villainy, as all the world will cry shame on: call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse. 2. It was prodigious madness; *O foolish people and unwise.* Fools, and double fools; *who has bewitched you?* *Gal. iii. 1.* Fools indeed, to disoblige one on whom you have such a necessary dependence! To forsake your own mercies for lying vanities! Note, All wilful sinners, especially sinners in Israel, are the most unwise, and the most ungrateful people in the world.

7. ¶ Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee, thy elders, and they will tell thee. 8. When the Most high divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. 9. For the LORD's portion is his people: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. 10. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness: he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. 11. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; 12. So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. 13. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the field, and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock. 14. Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.

Moses having in general represented God to them as their great benefactor, whom they were bound in gratitude to observe and obey; in these verses gives particular instances of God's kindness to them, and concern for them.

1. Some instances were ancient; and for proof of them, he appeals to the records, *ver. 7. Remember the days of old*; i. e. Keep in remembrance the history of those days, and of the wonderful providences of God concerning the old world, and concerning your ancestors Adam, Isaac, and Jacob, you will find a constant series of mercies attending them, and how long since things were in working towards that which is now come to pass. Note, The authentic histories of ancient times are of singular use, and especially the history of the Church in its infancy, both the Old Testament and the New Testament Church.

2. Others were more modern; and for proof of them, he appeals to their fathers and elders that were now alive and with them. Parents must diligently teach their children, not only the word of God, his laws, *Deut. vi. 7.* and the meaning of his ordinances, *Exod. xii. 26.* but his works also, and the methods of his providence. See *Psal. lxxviii. 3, 4, 6, 7.* And children should desire the knowledge of those things which will be of use to engage them to their duty, and to direct them in it.

Three things are here enlarged upon as instances of God's kindness to his people Israel, and strong obligations upon them never to forsake him.

1. The early designation of the land of Canaan for their inheritance; for herein it was a type and figure of our heavenly inheritance, that it was of old ordained and prepared in the divine counsels, *ver. 8.* When the earth was divided among the sons of men, in the days of Peleg, after the flood, and each family had its lot, in which it must settle, and by degrees grow up into a nation, then God had Israel in his thoughts, and in his eye; for designing this good land into which they were now going, to be in due time an inheritance for them, he ordered that the posterity of Canaan, rather than any other of the families then in being, should be planted there in the mean time, to keep possession as it were till Israel was ready for it; because those families were under the curse of Noah, by which they were condemned to servitude and ruin, *Gen. ix. 25.* and therefore would be the more justly, honourably, easily, and effectually rooted out, when the fulness of time was come that Israel should take possession. Thus he set the bounds of that people with an eye to the designed number of the children of Israel, that they might have just as much as would serve their turn. And some observe, that Canaan himself with his eleven sons, *Gen. x. 15.* &c. make up just the number of the twelve tribes of Israel. Note, 1. The wisdom of God has appointed the bounds of men's habitation, and determined both the place and time of our living in the world, *Acts xvii. 26.* When he gave the earth to the children of men, *Plal. cxv. 16.* it was not that every man might catch as he could; no, he divides to nations their inheritance, and will have every one to know his own, and not invade another's property. 2. Infinite wisdom has a vast reach, and designs beforehand what is brought to pass long after; *Known unto God are all his works*

from the beginning to the end, *Acts* xv. 18. but they are not so to us. *Ecc.* iii. 11. 3. The great God, in governing the world, and ordering the affairs of estates and kingdoms, has a special regard to his church and people, and consults their good in all. See *2 Chron.* xvi. 9. and *Isa.* xlv. 4. The Canaanites thought they had as good and sure a title to their land as any of their neighbours had to theirs; but God intended they should only be tenants till the Israelites, their landlords came. Thus God serves his own purposes of kindness to his people, by those that neither know him nor love them, *who mean not so, neither doth their hearts think so*, *Micah* iv. 12.

The reason given for this particular care God took for his people, so long before they were either born or thought of (as I may say) in our world, doth yet more magnify the kindness, and make it obliging beyond expression, *ver.* 9. *For the Lord's portion is his people.* All the world is his, he is owner and possessor of heaven and earth, but his Church is his in a peculiar manner; it is his demesne, his vineyard, his garden enclosed: he has a particular delight in it, it is the beloved of his soul, in it he walks, he dwells, it is his rest for ever. He has a particular concern for it, keeps it as the apple of his eye; he has particular expectations from it, as a man has from his portion; has a much greater rent of honour, glory and worship from that distinguished remnant than from all the world beside. That God should be his people's portion is easy to be accounted for, for he is their joy and felicity, but how they should be his portion, who neither needs them, nor can be benefited by them, must be resolved into the wondrous condescensions of free grace. *Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thine eyes* so to call and count them.

2. The forming of them into a people that they might be fit to enter upon this inheritance, like an heir at age, at the time appointed of the father. And herein also Canaan was a figure of the heavenly inheritance, for as it was from eternity proposed and designed for all God's spiritual Israel, so they are in time, (and it is a work of time) fitted and made meet for it, *Col.* i. 12. The deliverance of Israel out of slavery, by the destruction of their oppressors, was attended with so many wonders obvious to sense, and had been so often spoken of, that it needed not to be mentioned in this song: but the gracious works of God wrought upon them would be less taken notice of than the glorious works he had wrought for them, and therefore he chooseth rather to instance in them. A great deal was done to model this people, to cast them into some shape, and to fit them for the great things designed them in the land of promise; and it is here most elegantly described.

(1.) *He found them in a desert land*, *ver.* 10. This refers, no doubt, to the wilderness through which God brought them to Canaan, and in which he took so much pains with them, it is called *the church in the wilderness*, *Acts* vii. 38. There it was born and nursed and educated, that all might appear to be divine, and from heaven, since they had there no communication with any part of this earth either for food or learning. But because he is said to find them there, it seems designed also to represent both the ill state and the ill character of that people, when God began first to appear for them. (1.) Their condition was forlorn, Egypt was to them a desert land, and a vast howling wilderness, for they were bond-slaves in it, and cried by reason of their oppression, and were perfectly bewildered and at a loss for relief; there God found them, and thence he fetched them. And, (2.) Their disposition was very unpromising, so ignorant were the generality of them in divine things, so stupid and unapt to receive the impressions of them, so peevish and humourful, so froward and quarrelsome, and withal so strangely addicted to the idolatries of Egypt, that they might well be said to be found in a desert land; for one might as reasonably expect a crop of corn from a barren wilderness, as any good fruit or service to God from a people of such character. Those that are renewed and sanctified by grace, should often remember what they were by nature.

(2.) *He led him about and instructed him.* When God had them in the wilderness he did not bring them directly to Canaan, but made them go a great compass round, and so he instructed them; *2. c.* 1. By this means he took time to instruct them, and gave them commandments as they were able to receive them. Those whose business it is to instruct others, must not expect it will be done of a sudden; learners must have time to learn. 2. By this means he tried their faith and patience, and dependence upon God, and inured them to the hardships of the wilderness, and so instructed them. Every stage had something in it that was instructive: even when he chastened them, he thereby taught them out of his law. It is said, *Psal.* cvii. 7. *That he led them forth by the right way*; and yet here, that he led them about; for God always leads his people the right way, however to us it may seem about, proves, if not the next way, yet the best way home to Canaan. How God instructed them, is explained long after, *Neh.* ix. 13. *Thou gavest them right judgments and true laws, good statutes and commandments*; and especially, *ver.* 20. *Thou gavest them also thy good Spirit to instruct them*, and he instructs effectually. We may well imagine, how unfit that people had been for Canaan, had they not first gone through the discipline of the wilderness.

(3.) *He kept them as the apple of his eye*, with all the care and tenderness that could be, from the malignant influences of an open sky and air and all the perils of an inhospitable desert. The pillar of a cloud and fire was both guide and a guard to them.

(4.) *He did that for them which the eagle doth for her nest of young ones*, *ver.* 11, 12. The similitude was touched, *Exod.* xix. 4. *I bare you on eagle's wings*; here it is enlarged upon. Eagles are observed to have a strong affection to their young, and to shew it not only as other creatures, by protecting them and making provision for them, but by educating them and teaching them to fly. For that purpose she flirts them up out of the nest where they lie dozing, flutters over them, to shew them how they must use their wings, and then useth them to fly upon her wings till they have learned to fly upon their own. This, by the way, is an example to parents to train up their children to business, and not to indulge them in idleness and the love of ease. God did thus by Israel; when they were in love with their slavery, and loth to leave it; God, by Moses, stirred them up to aspire after liberty, and many a time kept them from returning to the house of bondage again. He carried them out of Egypt, led them into the wilderness, and now at length had led them through it. The Lord alone did lead them, he needed not any assistance, nor did he take any to be partner with him in the achievement; which was a good reason why they should serve the Lord only, and no other so much as in partnership, much less in rivalry with him. There was no strange god with him to contribute to Israel's salvation, and therefore there should be none to share in Israel's homage and adoration, *Psal.* lxxxi. 9.

3. The setting of them in a good land. This was done in part already, in the happy planting of the two tribes and a half, an earnest of what would speedily and certainly be done for the rest of the tribes.

1. They were blessed with glorious victories over their enemies; *ver.* 13. *He made him ride on the high places of the earth*, i. e. he brought him on with conquest, and brought him home with triumph. He rode over the high places or strong-holds, that were kept against him: sat in ease and

honour upon the fruitful hills of Canaan; in Egypt they looked mean and were so, in poverty and disgrace: but in Canaan they looked great and were so, advanced and enriched, they rode in state, as a people whom the King of kings did delight to honour.

2. With great plenty of all good things. Not only the ordinary increase of the field, but which was uncommon, *Honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock.* Which may refer either, (1.) To their miraculous supply with fresh water out of the rock that followed them in the wilderness; which is called *honey and oil*, because the necessity they were reduced to made it as sweet and acceptable as honey and oil at another time. Or, (2.) To the great abundance of honey and oil they should find in Canaan; even in those parts that were less fertile. The rocks of Canaan should yield a better increase than the fields and meads of other countries. Other of the products of Canaan are mentioned, *ver.* 14. Such abundance, and such variety of wholesome food, and every thing the best in its kind, that every meal might be a feast if they pleased. Excellent bread made of the best corn here called *the kidneys of the wheat*, for a grain of wheat is not much unlike a kidney: butter and milk in abundance; the flesh of cattle well fed; and for their drink no worse than the *pure blood of the grape*. So indulgent a father was God to them, and so kind a benefactor. Amworth makes the plenty of good things in Canaan to be a figure of the fruitfulness of Christ's kingdom and the heavenly comforts of his word and Spirit; for the children of his kingdom he has *butter and milk*, the sincere milk of the word, and *strong meat for strong men*, with the *wine that makes glad the heart*.

15. ¶ But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation. 16. They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. 17. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. 18. Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.

We have here a description of the apostacy of Israel from God, which would shortly come to pass, and which already they had a disposition to. One would have thought a people under so many obligations to their God, in duty, gratitude and interest, should never have turned from him, but alas, they turned aside quickly.

Here are two great instances of their wickedness, and each of them amounted to an apostacy from God.

1. Security and sensuality, pride and insolence, and the other common abuses of plenty and prosperity, *ver.* 15. These people were called Jeshurun, an upright people, so some; a seeing people, so others: but they soon lost the reputation both of their knowledge and of their righteousness; for being well fed, (1.) They waxed fat, and grew thick, i. e. they indulged themselves in all manner of luxury and gratifications of their appetites, as if they had nothing to do but to make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts of it. They grew fat, i. e. they grew big and unwieldy, mindless of business, and unfit for it: dull and stupid, careless and senseless, and this was the effect of their plenty. Thus the prosperity of fools destroys them, *Prov.* i. 22. Yet this was not the worst of it. (2.) They kicked: they grew proud and insolent, and lift up the heel even against God himself; if God rebuked them either by his prophets, or by his providence, they kicked against the good, as an untamed heifer, or a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, and in their rage persecuted the prophets, and flew in the face of providence itself. And thus he forsook God that made him, not paying due respect to his Creator, nor answering the ends of his creation, and put an intolerable contempt upon the rock of his salvation, as if he were not indebted to him for any past favours, nor had any dependence upon him for the future. Those that make a god of themselves, and a god of their bellies in pride and wantonness, and cannot bear to be told of it, certainly thereby forsake God, and shew how light they esteem him.

2. Idolatry was the great instance of their apostacy; and which the former led them to, as it made them sick of their religion, self-willed, and fond of changes. Observe,

1. What sort of gods they chose and offered sacrifice to, when they forsook the God that made them, *ver.* 16, 17. This aggravated their sin, that those very services which they should have done to the true God, they did, (1.) To strange gods, that could not pretend ever to have done them any kindness, or laid them under any obligation to them; gods that they had no knowledge of, nor could expect any benefit by, for they were strangers. Or, they are called strange gods, because they were other than the one only true God to whom they were betrothed, and ought to have been faithful. (2.) To new gods, that came newly up, for even in religion, the antiquity of which is one of its honours, vain minds have strangely affected novelty, and in contempt of the ancients of former days have been fond of new gods. A new god! Can there be a more monstrous absurdity? Would we find the right way to rest, we must ask for the good old way, *Jer.* vi. 16. It was true, their fathers had worshipped other gods, *Josh.* xxiv. 2. and perhaps it had been some little excuse if the children had returned to them; but to serve new gods whom their fathers feared not, and to like them the better for being new, was to open a door to endless idolatries. (3.) They were such as were no gods at all, but mere counterfeits and pretenders; their names the inventions of men's fancies, and their images the work of men's hands. Nay, (4.) They were devils. So far from being gods, fathers and benefactors to mankind, that really they were destroyers; so the word signifies; such as aimed to do mischief: if there were any spirits or invisible powers that possessed their idol temples and images, they were evil spirits and malignant powers, whom yet they did not need to worship for fear they should hurt them, as they say the Indians do; for they that faithfully worship God are out of the devil's reach: nay, the devil can destroy those only that sacrifice to him. How mad are idolaters, who forsake the rock of salvation to run themselves upon the rock of perdition!

2. What a great affront this was to Jehovah their God.

1. It was justly interpreted a forgetting of him, *ver.* 18. *of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful.* Mindfulness of God would prevent sin, but when the world is served and the flesh indulged, God is forgotten: and can any thing be more base and unworthy than to forget the God that is the author of our being, by whom we subsist, and in whom we live and move? and see what comes of it, *Isa.* xvii. 10, 11. *Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength, though the strange slips be pleasant plants at first, yet the harvest at last will be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.* There is nothing got by forgetting God.

2. It was justly resented as an inexcusable offence. *They provoked him to jealousy, and to anger*, ver. 16. for their idols were abominations to him. See here God's displeasure against idols, whether they be set up in the heart or in the sanctuary. 1. He is jealous of them, as rivals with them for the throne in the heart. 2. He hates them, as enemies to his crown and government. 3. He is and will be very angry with those that have any respect or affection for them. Those consider not what they do that provoke God, for *who knows the power of his anger?*

19. And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. 20. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end *shall be*: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. 21. They have moved me to jealousy with *that which is not god*, they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with *those which are not a people*, I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. 22. For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. 23. I will heap mischiefs upon them: I will spend mine arrows upon them. 24. *They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction*: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. 25. The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also, with the man of gray hairs.

The method of this song follows the method of the predictions in the foregoing chapter, and therefore after the revolt of Israel from God, described in the foregoing verses, here follows immediately the resolves of divine justice concerning them: we deceive ourselves if we think that God will thus be mocked by a foolish, faithless people, that play fast and loose with him.

1. He had delighted in them, but now he would reject them with detestation and disdain, ver. 19. When the Lord saw their treachery and folly in base ingratitude, he abhorred them, he despised them. So some read it. Sin makes us odious in the sight of the holy God; and no sinners are so loathsome to him, as those that he has called, and that have called themselves his sons and his daughters, and yet have been provoking to him. Note, The nearer any are to God in profession, the more noisome are they to him if they are defiled in a sinful way, *Psal. cvi. 39.*

2. He had given them the tokens of his presence with them, and his favour to them; but now he would withdraw, and *hide his face from them*, ver. 20. His *hiding his face* signifies his great displeasure, they had turned the back upon God, and now God would turn his back upon them, (compare *Jer. xviii. 17.* with *Jer. ii. 27.*) but here it notes also the slowness of God's proceedings against them in a way of judgment. They began in their apostasy with omissions of good, and so proceeded to commissions to evil. In like manner God will first suspend his favours, and let them see what the issue of that will be, what a friend they lose when they provoke God to depart; and will try whether that will bring them to repentance. Thus we find God hiding himself, as it were, in expectations of the event, *Isa. lvii. 17.* To justify himself in leaving them, he shews that they were such as there was no dealing with: for, 1. They were forward, and a people that could not be pleased; or, obstinate in sin, and that could not be convinced and reclaimed. 2. They were faithless, and a people that could not be trusted. When he saved them, and took them into covenant, he said, *Surely they are children that will not lie*, *Isa. lxiii. 8.* but when they proved otherwise, *children in whom is no faith*, they deserved to be abandoned, and that the God of truth should have no more to do with them.

3. He had done every thing to make them easy and to please them, but now he would do that against them which should be most vexatious to them. The punishment here answers the sin, ver. 21. (1.) They had provoked God with despicable deities, which were not gods at all, but vanities; creatures of their own imagination, that could not pretend either to merit, or to repay the respects of their worshippers; the more vain and vile the gods were after which they went a whoring, the greater was the offence to that great and good God whom they set them up in competition with and contradiction to. This put two great evils into their idolatry, *Jer. ii. 13.* (2.) God would therefore plague them with despicable enemies, that were worthless, weak, and inconsiderable, and not deserving the name of a people, which was a great mortification to them, and aggravated the oppressions they groaned under. The more base the people were that tyrannised over them, the more barbarous they would be, none so insolent as a beggar on horseback; besides that it would be infamous to Israel, who had so often triumphed over great and mighty nations, to be themselves trampled upon by the weak and foolish, and to come under the curse of Canaan, who was to be a servant of servants. But God can make the weakest instrument a scourge to the strongest sinner; and they that by sin insult their mighty Creator, are justly insulted by the meanest of their fellow-creatures. This was remarkably fulfilled in the days of the Judges, when they were sometimes oppressed by the very Canaanites themselves, whom they had subdued, as *Judges iv. 3.* But the apostle applies it to the conversion of the Gentiles, who had not been a people in covenant with God, and foolish in divine things, yet were brought into the Church solely to the grief of the Jews, who, upon all occasions, shewed a great indignation at it, which was both their sin and their punishment, as envy always is, *Rom. x. 19.*

3. He had planted them in a good land, and replenished them with all good things; but now he would strip them of all their comforts, and bring them to ruin. The judgments threatened are very terrible, ver. 22—25. (1.) The fire of God's anger shall consume them, ver. 22. Are they proud of their plenty? It shall burn up the increase of the earth: Are they confident of their strength? it shall destroy the very foundations of their mountains: there is no fence against the judgments of God when they come with commission to lay all waste. It shall burn to the lowest hell, i. e. it shall bring them to the very depth of misery in this world, which yet would be but a faint resemblance of the complete and endless misery of sinners in the other world. The damnation of hell (as our Saviour calls it) is the fire of God's anger, fastening upon the guilty conscience of a sinner to its inexpressible and everlasting torment, *Isa. xxx. 33.* (2.) The arrows of God's judgments shall be spent upon them, till his quiver is quite exhausted, ver.

23. The judgments of God, like arrows, fly swiftly, *Psal. lxiv. 7.* reach those at a distance who flatter themselves with hopes of escaping them, *Psal. xxi. 8—12.* they came from an unseen hand, but wound mortally, for God never misseth his mark, *2 Kings xxii. 34.* The particular judgments here threatened are, (1.) Famine, they shall be burnt, or parched with hunger. (2.) Pestilence and other diseases, here called burning heat, and bitter destruction. (3.) The insults of the inferior creatures; *the teeth of beasts, and the poison of serpents*, ver. 24. (4.) War and the fatal consequences of it, ver. 25. (1.) Perpetual frights. When the sword is without, there cannot but be terror within; *2 Cor. vii. 5.* without were fightings, within were fears; those who cast off the fear of God are justly exposed to the fear of enemies. (2.) Universal deaths; the sword of the Lord when it is sent to lay all waste will destroy without distinction; neither the strength of the young man, nor the beauty of the virgin, nor the innocence of the suckling, nor the gravity nor infirmity of the man of grey hairs, will be their security from the sword when it devours one as well as another. Such devastations doth war make, especially when it is pushed on by men as ravenous as wild beasts, and as venomous as serpents, ver. 24. See here what mischief sin doth, and reckon those fools that make a mock at it.

26. I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: 27. Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the LORD hath not done all this. 28. For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. 29. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! 30. How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up? 31. For their rock is not as our rock, even our enemies themselves being judges. 32. For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter. 33. Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps. 34. Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures? 35. To me belongeth vengeance and recompence, their foot shall slide in due time, for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. 36. For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants; when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left. 37. And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted. 38. Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection.

After many terrible threatenings of deserved wrath and vengeance, we have here surprizing intimations of mercy, undeserved mercy, which rejoiceth against judgment, and by which it appears that God has no pleasure in the death of sinners, but would rather they should turn and live.

1. In jealousy for his own honour, he will not make a full end of them, ver. 26, 27, 28. (1.) It cannot be denied, but that they deserved to be utterly ruined, and that their remembrance should be made to cease from among men; so that the name of an Israelite should never be known but in history; for they were a nation void of council, ver. 28. The most foolish, inconsiderate people that ever were; that would not believe the glory of God, though they saw it, nor understand his loving-kindness, though they tasted it and lived upon it. Of them who could cast off such a God, such a law, such a covenant, for vain and dunghill deities, it might truly be said, there is no understanding in them. (2.) It had been an easy thing with God to ruin them and blot out the remembrance of them; when the greatest part of them were cut off by the sword, it was but scattering the remnant into some remote obscure corners of the earth, where they should never have been heard of more, and the thing had been done. See *Ezek. v. 12.* God can destroy those that are most strongly fortified, disperse those that are most closely united, and bury those names in perpetual oblivion that have been most celebrated. (3.) Justice demanded it. *I said I would scatter them.* It is fit they should be cut off from the earth, that have cut themselves off from their God; why should they not be dealt with according to their deserts? (4.) Wisdom considered the pride and insolency of the enemy, which would take occasion from the ruin of a people that had been so dear to God, and for whom he had done such great things, to reflect upon God, and to imagine that because he had got the better of Israel, they had carried the day against the God of Israel. The adversaries will say, our hand is high; high indeed, when it has been too high for those whom God himself fought for; nor will they consider that the Lord has done all this; but will dream that they have done it in despite of him, as if the God of Israel were as weak and impotent, and as easily to run down as the pretended deities of other nations. (5.) In consideration of this, mercy prevails for the sparing of a remnant, and the saving of that unworthy people from utter ruin. *I feared the wrath of the enemy.* It is an expression after the manner of men; it is certain God fears no man's wrath, but he acted in this matter as if he had feared it. Those few good people in Israel that had a concern for the honour of God's name, feared the wrath of the enemy in this instance more than in any other, as *Joshua, chap. vii. 9.* and David often; and because they feared it, God himself is said to fear it: He needed not Moses to plead it with him, but minded himself of it, *What will the Egyptians say?* Let all those whose hearts tremble for the ark of God and his Israel comfort themselves with this, that God will work for his own name, and will not suffer it to be profaned and polluted: how much soever we deserve to be disgraced, God will never disgrace the throne of his glory.

2. In concern for the welfare, he earnestly wisheth and desires their conversion; and in order to that, their serious consideration of their latter end, ver. 29. Observe, (1.) Though God had pronounced them a foolish people, and of no understanding; yet he wisheth they were wise, as *Deut. v. 29.* O that there were such a heart in them! and *Psal. xciv. 8.* Ye fools, when will ye be wise? God delights not to see sinners ruin themselves, but desires they will help themselves; and if they will, he is ready to help them. (2.) It is a great piece of wisdom, and will contribute much to the return

return of sinners to God, seriously to consider the latter end; or, the future state. It is here meant particularly of that which God by Moses had foretold concerning this people in the latter days; but it may be applied more generally. We ought to understand and consider, (1.) The latter end of life, and the future state of the soul. To think of death as our removal from a world of sense to a world of spirits; the final period of our state of trial and probation, and our entrance upon an unchangeable state of recompence and retribution. (2.) The latter end of sin, and the future state of those that live and die in it. O that men will consider the happiness they will lose, and the misery they will certainly plunge themselves into if they go on still in their trespasses, what will be in the end thereof? Jer. v. 31. *Jerusalem forgot this, and therefore came down wonderfully*, Lam. i. 9.

He calls to mind the great things he had done for them formerly, as a reason why he should not quite cast them off. This seems to be the meaning of that, ver. 30, 31. How should one Israelite have been too hard for a thousand Canaanites, as they have been many a time, but that God, who is greater than all gods, fought for them? and so it comes in like that, *Ish. lxiii. 10, 11*. When he was turned to be their enemy, as here, and fought against them for their sins, then he remembered the days of old, saying, *Where is he that brought them out of the sea?* So here, his arm begins to awake as in the days of old, against the wrath of the enemy, *Psal. cxxxviii. 7*. There was a time when the enemies of Israel were sold by their own rock, i. e. their own idol gods, who could not help them, but betray them, because Jehovah, the God of Israel, had shut them up as sheep for the slaughter: For the enemies themselves must own, that their gods were a very unequal match for the God of Israel. *For their vine is of the vine of Sodom*, ver. 32, 33. This must be meant of the enemies of Israel, who therefore fell so easily before the sword of Israel, because they were ripe for ruin, and the measure of their iniquity was full.

Yet these verses may be understood of the strange prevalency of the enemies of Israel against them, when God made use of them as the rod of his anger, *Ish. x. 5, 6*. How should one Canaanite chase a thousand Israelites, (as it is threatened against those that trusted to Egypt for help, *Ish. xxx. 17*. *One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one*) unless Israel's rock had deserted them, and given them up? for otherwise however they may impute their power unto their gods, *Hab. i. 11*. as the Philistines imputed their victory to Dagon; it is certain, the enemies' rock could not have prevailed against the rock of Israel; God would soon have subdued their enemies, (*Psal. lxxxi. 14*.) but that the wickedness of Israel delivered them into their hands: For their vine, that is Israel's, is of the vine of Sodom, ver. 32, 33. They were planted a choice vine, wholly a right seed, but by sin were become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, *Jer. ii. 21*. and not only transcribed the iniquity of Sodom, but out-did it, *Ezek. xvi. 48*. God called them his vineyard, his pleasant plant, *Ish. v. 7*. But their fruits were, (1.) Very offensive, and displeasing to God, bitter as gall. (2.) Very malignant and pernicious one to another, like the cruel venom of asps. Some understand this of their punishment; their sin would be bitterness in the latter end; it would bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder, *Job xx. 14*.

4. He resolves upon the destruction of those at last that had been their persecutors and oppressors. When the cup of trembling goes round, the king of Babel shall pledge it at last, *Ser. xxv. 26*. and see *Ish. li. 22, 23*. The day is coming, when the judgment that began at the house of God, shall end with the sinner and ungodly, *1 Pet. iv. 17, 18*.

God will in due time bring down the Church's enemies,

1. In displeasure against their wickedness, which he takes notice of, and keeps an account of, ver. 34, 35. Is not this implacable fury of theirs against Israel, laid up in store with me, to be reckoned for hereafter, when it shall be made to appear, that to me belongs vengeance? Some understand it of the sin of Israel; especially their persecuting the prophets, which was laid up in store against them from the blood of righteous Abel, *Matth. xxiii. 35*. However, it teacheth us, that the wickedness of the wicked is all laid up in store with God. (1.) He observes it, *Psal. xc. 8*. He knows both what the vine is, and what the grapes: what the temper of the mind, and what the actions of the life. (2.) He keeps a record of it, both in his own omniscience, and in the sinner's conscience; and this is sealed up among his treasure, which notes both safety and secrecy: These books cannot be lost; nor will they be opened till the great day. See *Hos. xiii. 12*. (3.) He often delays the punishment of sin for a great while, it is laid up in store, till the measure be full, and the day of divine patience be expired. See *Job xxi. 29, 30*. (4.) There is the day of reckoning coming, when all the treasures of guilt and wrath will be broken up, and the sin of sinners shall surely find them out. 1. The thing itself will certainly be done, for the Lord is a God to whom vengeance belongs, and therefore he will repay, *Ish. lix. 18*. This is quoted by the apostle, to shew the severity of God's wrath against those that revolt from the faith of Christ, *Heb. x. 30*. 2. It will be done in due time, in the best time; nay, it will be done in a short time, *The day of their calamity is at hand*; and though it may seem to tarry, it lingers not, it slumbers not, but it makes haste. In one hour shall the judgment of Babylon come.

2. He will do it in compassion to his own people, who, though they had greatly provoked him, yet stood in relation to him, and their misery appealed to his mercy, ver. 36. The Lord shall judge his people, i. e. judge for them against their enemies, plead their cause, and break the yoke of oppression, under which they had long groaned, repenting himself for his servants; not changing his mind, but changing his way, and fighting for them, as he had fought against them, when he sees that their power is gone. This plainly points at the deliverances of God wrought for Israel by the judges out of the hands of those to whom he had sold them for their sins. See *Judg. ii. 11—19*. And how his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel, *Judg. x. 16*. And this when they were reduced to the last extremity, God helped them when they could not help themselves; for there were none shut up or left; i. e. none that dwelt either in cities or walled towns, in which they were shut up, nor any that dwelt in scattered houses in the country, in which they were left at a distance from neighbours. Note, God's time to appear for the deliverance of his people is, when things are at the worst with them. God tries his people's faith, and stirs up prayer, by letting things go to the worst, and then magnifies his own power, and fills the faces of his enemies with shame, and the hearts of his people with so much the greater joy, by rescuing them out of extremity, as brands out of the burning.

3. He will do it in contempt, and to the reproach of the idol gods, ver. 37, 38. Where are the gods? Two ways it may be understood; 1. That God would do that for his people, which the idols they had served could not do for them. They had forsaken God, and been very liberal in their sacrifices to idols; had brought to their altars the fat of their sacrifices, and the wine of their drink offerings, which they supposed their deities to feed upon, and on which they feasted with them: Now, saith God, will these gods you have made your court to, at so great an expence, help you in your distress, and so repay you for all your charges in their service? Go get you to the gods you have served, and let them deliver you, *Judg. x. 14*. This is intended to convince them of their folly in forsaking a God that could help them, for those that could not, and so to bring them to repentance, and

qualify them for deliverance. When the adulterers shall follow after her lovers, and not overtake them, pray to her idols and receive no kindness from them, then she shall say, I will go and return to my first husband, *Hos. ii. 7*. See *Ish. xvi. 12*. *Jer. ii. 28*. Or, 2. That God would do that against his enemies, which the idols they had served, could not save them from. Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar boldly challenged the God of Israel to deliver his worshippers, *Ish. xxxvii. 10*. *Dan. iii. 15*. and he did deliver them, to the confusion of their enemies. But the God of Israel challenged Bel and Nebo to deliver their worshippers, to rise up and help them, and to be their protection, *Ish. xlvii. 12, 13*. but they were so far from helping them, that they themselves, i. e. their images, which was all that was of them, went into captivity, *Ish. xlv. 1, 2*. Note, Those who trust to any rock but God, will find it sand in the day of their distress; it will fail them then when they most need it.

39. See now that I even I am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive: I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. 40. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say I live for ever. 41. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. 42. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, (and my sword shall devour flesh) and that with the blood of the slain, and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy. 43. Rejoice, O ye nations with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.

This conclusion of the song speaks three things.

1. Glory to God, ver. 39. See now upon the whole matter, that I, even I am he. Learn this from the destruction of idolaters, and the inability of their idols to help them. The great God here demands the glory, (1.) Of a self-existence; I, even I am he. Thus Moses concludes with that name of God, by which he was first made to know him, *Exod. iii. 14*. I am that I am. I am he that have been, that I will be, that I have promised to be, that I have threatened to be; all shall find me true to both: The Targum of Uzzielides paraphraseth it thus, When the word of the Lord shall reveal himself to redeem his people, he shall say to all people, See that I now am what I am, and have been, and I am what I will be: Which we know very well how to apply to him, who said to John, I am he which is, and was, and is to come, *Rev. i. 8*. These words, I, even I am he, we meet with often in those chapters of Isaiah, where God is encouraging his people to hope for their deliverance out of Babylon, *Ish. xli. 4—xlii. 11, 12, 13, 25—xlv. 4*. (2.) Of a sole supremacy; there is no god with me. None to help with me, none to cope with me. See *Ish. xliii. 10, 11*. (3.) Of an absolute sovereignty, and universal agency: I kill, and I make alive, i. e. All evil, and all good come from his hand of providence, he forms both the light of life, and the darkness of death, *Ish. xlv. 7*. *Lam. iii. 37, 38*. Or, he kills and wounds his enemies, but heals and makes alive his own people; kills and wounds with his judgments those that revolt from him, and rebel against him; but when they return and repent, he heals them, and makes them alive with his mercy and grace. Or, it notes his incontestible authority to dispose of all his creatures, and the beings he has given them, so as to serve his own purposes by them; whom he will he slays, and whom he will he keeps alive, when his judgments are abroad. Or, thus, though he kill, yet he makes alive again; though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, *Lam. iii. 32*. Though he have torn, he will heal us, *Hos. vi. 1, 2*. The Jerusalem Targum reads it, I kill those that are alive in this world, and make those alive in the other world that are dead. And some of the Jewish doctors themselves have observed, that death, and a life after it, that is eternal life, is intimated in these words. (4.) Of an irresistible power, which cannot be controuled; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand, those that I have marked for destruction. As no exception can be made against the sentence of God's justice, so no escape can be made from the executions of his power.

2. Terror to his enemies, ver. 40, 41, 42. Terror indeed, to those that hate him, as all those do that serve other gods, that persist in wilful disobedience to the divine law, and that malign and persecute his faithful servants; these are they whom God will render vengeance to; those his enemies that will not have him to reign over them. To frighten such in time to repent and return to their allegiance, the wrath of God is here revealed from heaven against them. 1. The divine sentence is ratified with an oath, ver. 40. He lifts up his hand to heaven, the habitation of his holiness; this was an ancient and very significant sign used in swearing; *Gen. xiv. 22*. And since he could swear by no greater, he swears by himself and his own life. Those are miserable without remedy, that have the word and oath of God against them. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, that the sin of sinners shall be their ruin, if they go on in it. 2. Preparation is made for the execution; the glittering sword is whet. See *Psal. vii. 12*. It is a sword bathed in heaven, *Ish. xxxiv. 5*. While the sword is in whetting, space is given to the sinner to repent and make his peace, which if he do not, the wound will be the deeper. And as the sword is whet, so the hand that is to wield it, takes hold on judgment with a resolution to go through with it. 3. The execution itself will be very terrible; the sword shall devour flesh in abundance, and the arrows be made drunk with blood, such vast quantities of it shall be shed; the blood of the slain in battle, and of the captives to whom no quarter shall be given, but they should be put under military execution. When he begins revenge, he will make an end; for in this also his work is perfect. The critics are much perplexed with the last clause, *From the beginning of revenges upon the enemy*: The learned Bishop Patrick (that great master) thinks it may admit this reading, *From the king to the slave of the enemies*, *Jer. l. 35, 36, 37*. When the sword of God's wrath is drawn, it will make bloody work, blood to the horse-bridles, *Rev. xiv. 20*.

3. Comfort to his own people, ver. 43. Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people. He concludes the song with words of joy; for in God's Israel there is a remnant whose end will be peace; God's people will rejoice at last, will rejoice everlastingly. Three things are here mentioned as matter of joy. 1. The enlarging of the Church's bounds: the apostle applies the first words of this verse to the conversion of the Gentiles, *Rom. xv. 10*. Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. See what the grace of God doth in the conversion of souls, it brings them to rejoice with the people of God; for true religion brings us acquainted with true joy; so great a mistake are they under, that think it tends to make men melancholy. 2. The avenging of the Church's controversies upon her adversaries. He will make inquisition for the blood of his

his servants, and it shall appear how precious it is to him, for they that spilt it shall have blood given them to drink. 3. The mercy God has in store for his Church, and for all that belong to it, he will be *merciful to his land, and to his people*, i. e. to all every where that fear and serve him: Whatever judgments are brought upon sinners, it shall go well with the people of God, and in this let Jews and Gentiles rejoice together.

44. ¶ And Moses came and spake all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he and Hoshea the son of Nun. 45. And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel. 46. And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day; which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. 47. For it is not a vain thing for you: because it is your life; and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it. 48. And the LORD spake unto Moses that self-same day, saying, 49. Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession. 50. And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people: 51. Because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel, at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel. 52. Yet thou shalt see the land before thee, but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the children of Israel.

Here it, 1. The solemn delivery of this song to the children of Israel, ver. 44, 45. Moses spake it to as many as could hear him, while Joshua, in another assembly, at the same time, delivered it to as many as his voice would reach. Thus coming to them from the mouth of both their governors, Moses that was laying down the government and Joshua that was taking it up, they would see they were both in the same song, and that though they changed their commander, there was no change in the divine command; Joshua, as well as Moses, would be a witness against them, if ever they forsook God.

2. An earnest charge to them to mind these, and all the rest of the good words that Moses had said to them. How earnestly doth he long after them all; how very desirous that the word of God might make deep and lasting impressions upon them; how jealous over them with a godly jealousy, lest they should at any time let slip these great things! (1.) The duties he chargeth upon them are, (1.) Carefully to attend to these things themselves; set your hearts both to the laws, and to the promises and threatenings; the blessings and curses, and now at last to this song. Let the mind be closely applied to the consideration of these things; be affected with them; be intent upon duty, and cleave to it with full purpose of heart. (2.) Faithfully to transmit these things to those that should come after them: What interest you have in your children, or influence upon them, use it for this purpose; and command them, (as your father Abraham did, Gen. xvii. 19.) to observe to do all the words of this law. They that are good themselves, cannot but desire that their children may be so likewise; and that posterity may keep up religion in their day, and the entail of it may not be cut off. (2.) The argument he useth to persuade them to make religion their business, and to persevere in it are, 1. The vast importance of the things themselves which he had charged upon them, ver. 47. *It is not a vain thing, because it is your life.* It is not an indifferent thing, but of absolute necessity; it is not a trifle, but a matter of consequence, a matter of life and death; mind it, and you are made for ever; neglect it, and you are for every undone. O that men were but fully possessed of this, that religion is their life, even the life of their souls! 2. The vast advantage it would be of to them; *through this thing ye shall prolong your days in Canaan*, which is a typical promise of that eternal life, which Christ has assured us they shall enter into, *that keep the commandments of God*, Matth. xix. 17.

3. Orders given to Moses concerning his death. Now this renowned witness for God has finished his testimony, he must go up to mount Nebo and die; and in the prophecy of Christ's two witnesses there is a plain illustration to Moses and Elias, Rev. xi. 6. and perhaps their removal being by martyrdom is no less glorious than the removal either of Moses or Elias. Orders were given to Moses that self-same day, ver. 48. Now he had done his work, why should he desire to live a day longer! He had indeed formerly prayed that he might go over Jordan, but now he is entirely satisfied, and, as God had bidden him, *saith no more of that matter.*

1. God here minds him of the sin he had been guilty of for which he was excluded Canaan, ver. 51. that he might the more patiently bear the rebuke because he had sinned; and that now he might renew his sorrow for that unadvised word, for it is good for the best of men to die repenting of the infirmities they are conscious to themselves of. It was an omission that was thus displeasing to God, he did not *sanctify God*, as he ought to have done before the children of Israel, he did not carry himself with a due decorum, in executing the orders he had then received.

2. He minds him of the death of his brother Aaron, ver. 50. to make his own the more familiar and the less formidable. Note, It is a great encouragement to us when we die, to think of our friends that have gone before us through that darksome valley, especially of Christ, our elder brother and great high-priest.

3. He sends him up to a high hill, from thence to take a view of the land of Canaan and then die, ver. 49—52. The remembrance of his sin might make death terrible, but the sight God gave him of Canaan took off the terror of it, as it was a token of God's being reconciled to him, and a plain indication to him, that though his sin shut him out of the earthly Canaan, yet it should not deprive him of that better country, which in this world can only be seen, and that with an eye of faith. Note, Those may die with comfort and ease whenever God calls for them, notwithstanding the sins they remember against themselves, who have a believing prospect and a well-grounded hope of eternal life beyond death.

C H A P. XXXIII.

Yet Moses has not done with the children of Israel; he seemed to have taken final leave of them in the close of the foregoing chapter, but still he hath something more to say. He had preached them a farewell sermon, a very copious and pathetic discourse. After sermon he had given out a psalm, a long psalm; and now nothing remains but to dismiss them with a blessing; that blessing he pronounceth in this chapter in the name of the Lord, and so leaves them. 1. He pronounceth them all blessed in what God had done for them already, especially in giving them his law, ver. 2—5. 2. He pronounceth a blessing upon each tribe, which is both a prayer for, and a prophecy of their felicity. 1. Reuben, ver. 6. 2. Judah, ver. 7. 3. Levi, ver. 8—11. 4. Benjamin, ver. 12. 5. Joseph, ver. 12—17. 6. Zebulun and Issachar, ver. 18, 19. 7. Gad, ver. 20. 8. Dan, ver. 22. 9. Naphtali, ver. 23. 10. Asher, ver. 24, 25. 3. He pronounceth them all in general blessed, upon the account of what God would be to them, and do for them, if they were obedient, ver. 26—29.

1. **A**ND this is the blessing wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. 2. And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousand of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them. 3. Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand; and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words. 4. Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. 5. And he was king in Jethurun, when the heads of the people, and the tribes of Israel, were gathered together.

The first verse is the title of the chapter: It is a blessing. In the foregoing chapter he had thundered out the terrors of the Lord against Israel for their sin, it was a chapter like Ezekiel's roll, full of lamentation and mourning and woe. Now to soften that, and that he might not seem to part in anger, he here subjoins a blessing, and leaves his peace, which should descend and rest upon all those among them that were the sons of peace. Thus Christ's last work on earth was to *bless his disciples*, Luke xxiv. 50. like in Moses here in token of parting friends. Moses blessed them, (1.) As a prophet; *a man of God*. Note, It is a very desirable thing to have an interest in the prayers of those that have an interest in heaven; it is a *prophet's reward*: And in this blessing Moses not only expresseth his good wishes to this people, but by the spirit of prophecy foretells things to come concerning them. (2.) As a parent to Israel, for so good princes are to their subjects. Jacob upon his death-bed *blessed his sons*, Gen. xlix. 1. in conformity to whose example Moses here blest the tribes that were descended from them, to shew that though they had been very provoking, yet the entail of the blessing was not cut off. The doing of this immediately before his death, would not only be the more likely to leave an impression upon them, but would be an indication of the great good-will of Moses to them, that he desired their happiness, though he must die and not share in it.

He begins this blessing with a lofty description of the glorious appearances of God to them in giving them the law, and the great advantage they had by it.

1. There was a visible and illustrious discovery of the divine majesty; enough to convince and for ever silence atheists and infidels, to awaken and affect those that were most stupid and careless, and to put to shame all secret inclinations to other gods, ver. 1. (1.) His appearance was glorious: he shines forth like the sun when he goes forth in his strength. Even Seir and Paran, two mountains at some distance were illuminated by the divine glory which appeared on mount Sinai, and reflected some of the rays of it; so bright was the appearance, and so much taken notice of by the adjacent countries. To this the prophet alludes, to set forth the wonders of the divine providence, Heb. iii. 3, 4. Psal. xviii. 7, 8, 9. The Jerusalem Targum has a strange gloss upon this, that when God came down to give the law, he offered it on mount Seir to the Edomites, but they refused it, because they found in it, *thou shalt not kill*. Then he offered it on mount Paran to the Ishmaelites, but they also refused it, because they found in it, *thou shalt not steal*; and then he came to mount Sinai and offered it to Israel, and they said, *All that the Lord shall say, we will do*. I would not have transcribed so groundless a conceit but for the antiquity of it. (2.) His attendance was glorious: he came with his holy myriads, as Enoch had long since foretold he should come in the last day to judge the world, Jude 14. These were the angels, those *chariots of God*, in the midst of which the Lord was, on that holy place, Psal. lxxviii. 17. They attended the divine majesty, and were employed as his ministers in the solemnities of the day. Hence the law is said to be given by the *disposition of angels*, Acts vii. 53. Heb. ii. 2.

2. He gave them his law, which is (1.) Called a fiery law, because it was given them out of the midst of the fire, Deut. iv. 33. and because it works like fire; if it be received it is melting, warming, purifying, and burns up the dross of corruption; if it be rejected it hardens, sears, torments, and destroys. The spirit descended in cloven tongues as of fire, for the gospel also is a fiery law. (2.) It is said to go from his right hand, either because he wrote it on tables of stone; or, noting the power and energy of the law, and the divine strength that goes along with it, that it may not return void. Or, it came as a gift to them, and a precious gift it was, a right-hand blessing. (3.) It was an instance of the special kindness he had for them. Yea, he loved the people; ver. 3. and therefore though it was a fiery law, yet it is said to go for them, ver. 2. and in favour to them. Note, The law of God written in the heart, is a certain evidence of the love of God shed abroad there: we must reckon God's law one of the gifts of his grace. Yea he embraced the people, or laid them in his bosom; so the word signifies, which speaks not only the dearest love, but the most tender and careful protection, (4.) *All his saints were in his hand*. Some understand it particularly of his supporting them and preserving them alive at mount Sinai, when the terror was so great that Moses himself quaked; they heard the voice of God and lived, Deut. iv. 33. Or it notes his forming them into a people by his law; he moulded and managed them, as the potter doth the clay,

clay. Or, they were in his hand to be covered and protected, used and disposed of as the seven stars were in the hand of Christ, *Rev. i. 16*. Note, God has all his saints in his hand, and though there are ten thousands of his saints, *ver. 2*. yet his hand with which he measures the waters is large enough, and strong enough to hold them all, and we may be sure that none can pluck them out of his hand, *John x. 28*.

3. He disposed them to receive the law which he gave them? they sat down at thy feet, as scholars at the feet of their master, in token of reverence, in attendance and humble submission to what is taught; so Israel sat at the foot of mount Sinai, and promised to hear and do whatever God should say. They were struck to thy feet, so some read it; *viz.* By the terrors of mount Sinai, which greatly humbled them for the present, *Exod. xx. 19*. Every one then stood ready to receive God's words, and shall do so again when the law shall be publicly read to them, as it was, *Josh. viii. 34*. It is a great privilege when we have heard the words of God to have opportunity of hearing them again, *John xvii. 26*. *I have declared thy name, and will declare it.* So Israel not only had received the law, but should still receive it, by their prayers, and other the lively oracles.

The people are taught, *ver. 4, 5*. in gratitude for the law of God, always to keep up an honourable remembrance both of the law itself, and of Moses by whom it was given. Two of the Chaldee paraphrasts read it, *The children of Israel said, Moses commanded us a law*: And the Jews say, that as soon as a child was able to speak, his father was obliged to teach him these words; *Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob*.

1. They are taught to speak with great respect of the law, and to call it, *the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob*. They looked upon it, (1.) As peculiar to them, and that by which they were distinguished from other nations, who neither had the knowledge of it, *Psal. cxlvii. 30*. nor if they had, were under those obligations to observe it that Israel was under; and therefore (saith Bishop Patrick) when the Jews conquered any country, they did not force any to embrace the law of Moses, but only to submit to the seven precepts of Noah. (2.) As entailed upon them; for so inheritances are to be transmitted to their posterity. And, (3.) As their wealth and true treasure. Those that enjoy the word of God and the means of grace, have reason to say, that they have a goodly heritage. He is indeed a rich man in whom the word of Christ dwells richly. Perhaps the law is called their inheritance, because it was given them with their inheritance, and was so annexed to it that the forsaking of the law would be a forfeiture of the inheritance. See *Psal. cix. 111*.

2. They are taught to speak with great respect of Moses; and they were the more obliged to keep up his name, because he had not provided for the keeping of it up in his family; his posterity were never called the sons of Moses, as the priests were the sons of Aaron. (1.) They must own Moses a great benefactor to their nation, in that he *commanded them the law*, for though it came from the hand of God, it went through the hand of Moses. (2.) *He was king in Jeshurun*. Having commanded them the law, as long as he lived, he took care to see it observed and put in execution, and they were very happy in having such a king, who ruled them, and went in and out before them at all times, but did in a special manner look great, when the heads of the people were gathered together, in parliament as it were, and Moses was president among them. Some understand this of God himself; he did then declare himself their king, when he gave them the law, and he continued so, as long as they were in Jeshurun, an upright people, and till they rejected him, *1 Sam. xii. 12*. But it seems rather to be understood of Moses. A good government is a great blessing to any people, and what they have reason to be very thankful for; and that constitution is very happy, which, as Israel's, which, as ours, divides the power between the king in Jeshurun and the heads of the tribes, when they are gathered together.

6. ¶ Let Reuben live, and not die: and let not his men be few. 7. ¶ And this is the blessing of Judah; and he said, Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people; let his hands be sufficient for him, and be thou an help to him from his enemies.

Here is, 1. The blessing of Reuben. Though Reuben had lost the honour of his birth-right, yet Moses begins with him, for we should not insult over them that are disgraced, nor desire to perpetuate marks of infamy upon any, though never so justly fastened at first, *ver. 6*. Moses desires and foretells, (1.) The preserving of this tribe, though a frontier tribe, on the other side Jordan, yet let it live, and not be either ruined by its neighbours, or lost among them. And perhaps he refers to those chosen men of that tribe, who having had their lot assigned them already, left their families in it, and were now ready to go over armed before their brethren, *Num. xxxii. 27*. let them be protected in this noble expedition, and their heads covered in the day of battle. (2.) The increase of this tribe, *Let not his men be few*; or, let his men be a number, *i. e.* let it be a numerous tribe; though their other honours be lost, so that they shall not excel, yet let them multiply. *Let Reuben live, and not die, though his men be few*; so Bishop Patrick thinks it may be rendered. Though he must not expect to flourish, (*Gen. xlix. 4*) yet let him not perish. All the Chaldee paraphrasts refer this to the other world; *Let Reuben live in life eternal, and not die the second death*: So Onkelos. *Let Reuben live in this world, and not die that death which the wicked die in the world to come*: So Jonathan and the Jerusalem Targum.

2. The blessing of Judah; which is put before Levi, because our Lord sprang out of Judah, and (as Dr. Lightfoot saith) because of the dignity of the kingdom above the priesthood. The blessing, *ver. 7*. may refer, either (1.) To the whole tribe in general. 1. Moses prays for, and prophesies the great prosperity of that tribe. That God would hear his prayers, (see an instance, *2 Chron. xiii. 14*.) settle him in his lot, prosper him in all his affairs, and give him victory over his enemies. It is taken for granted, that the tribe of Judah would be both a praying tribe and an active tribe. Lord saith Moses, hear his prayers, and give success to all his undertakings; let his hands be sufficient for him, both in husbandry and in war. The voice of prayer should always be attended with the hand of endeavour, and then we may expect prosperity.

Or, 2. It may refer in particular to David, as a type of Christ; that God would hear his prayers, *Psal. xx. 1*. And Christ was heard always, *John xi. 42*. That he would give him victory over his enemies, and success in his great undertakings. See *Psal. lxxxix. 20*. And that prayer, that God would bring him to his people, seems to refer to Jacob's prophecies concerning Shiloh. That to him should the gathering of the people be, *Gen. xlix. 10*.

The tribe of Simeon is omitted in the blessing, because Jacob had left it under a brand, and it had never done any thing, as Levi had done, to retrieve its honour. It was lessened in the wilderness more than any other of the tribes; and Zimri, who was so notoriously guilty in the matter of Peor but the other day, was of that tribe. Or, because the lot of Simeon was an appendage to that of Judah, that tribe is included in the blessing of

Judah. Some copies of the LXX join Simeon with Reuben, *Let Reuben live and not die; and let Simeon be many in number*.

8. ¶ And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; 9. Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children; for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant. 10. They shall teach Jacob thy judgment, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt-sacrifices upon thine altar. 11. Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hand: smite through the loins of them that rise against him and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.

Moses is large in blessing the tribe of Levi; not so much because it was his own tribe (for he takes no notice of his relation to it) as because it was God's tribe. The blessing of Levi has reference,

1. To the high-priest, here called God's holy one, *ver. 8*. because his office was holy, in token of which, *Holiness to the Lord* was written upon his forehead. (1.) He seems to acknowledge, that God might justly have displaced Aaron in his seat, for his sin at Meribah, *Numb. xx. 12*. So many understand it. It is rather probable to me, that on the contrary, he pleads with God the zeal and faithfulness of Aaron, and his boldness in stemming the tide of the people's murmurings at the other Meribah, *Exod. xvii. 7*. which might be very remarkable, and which God might have an eye to in conferring the priesthood upon him, though no mention be made of it there. All the Chaldee paraphrasts agree, that it was a trial in which he was found perfect and faithful, and stood in the trial; therefore not that, *Numb. xx. (2.)* He prays that the office of the high-priest might ever remain, *Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with him*. It was given him for some eminent piece of service, as appears, *Mal. ii. 5*. Lord, let it never be taken from him. Notwithstanding this blessing the Urim and Thummim was lost in the captivity, and never restored under the second temple; but it has its full accomplishment in Jesus Christ, God's holy one, and our great and high priest, of whom Aaron was a type, with whom, who had lain in his father's bosom from eternity, the Urim and Thummim shall remain; for he is the wonderful and everlasting counsellor. Some translate the Thummim and Urim appellatively; the rather because the usual order is here inverted, and here only: Thummim signifies the integrity, and Urim illumination; *Let these be with thy holy one, i. e.* Lord, let the High Priest ever be both an upright man and an understanding man. A good prayer to be put up for the ministers of the gospel, that they may have clear heads and honest hearts, light and sincerity make a complete minister.

2. To the inferior priests and Levites *ver. 9, 10, 11*. 1. He commends the zeal of this tribe for God, when they sided with Moses (and so with God) against the worshippers of the golden calf, *Exod. xxxii. 26*, &c. and being employed in cutting off the ring-leaders in that wickedness, they did it impartially: the best friends they had in the world, though as dear to them as their next relations, they did not spare them if they were idolaters. Note, Our regard to God and to his glory, ought always to prevail above our regard to any creature whatsoever. And those who not only keep themselves pure from the common iniquities of the times and places in which they live, but, as they are capable, utter testimony against them, and stand up for God against the evil doers, shall have special marks of honour put upon them. Perhaps Moses may have an eye to the sons of Korah, who refused to join with their father in his gain-saying, *Numb. xxvi. 11*. Alas to Phineas, who executed judgment, and stayed the plague. And indeed, the office of the priests and Levites, which engaged their constant attendance, at least in their turns, at God's altar, laid them under a necessity of being frequently absent from their families, which they could not take such care of, nor make such provision for, as other Israelites might. This was the constant self-denial they submitted to, that they might observe God's word, and keep the covenant of priesthood. Note, Those that are called to minister in holy things, must sit loose to the relations and interests that are dearest to them in this world, and prefer the fulfilling of their ministry before the gratifying of the best friend they have, *Acts xxi. 13*. — *xx. 24*. Our Lord Jesus knew not his mother and his brethren, when they would have taken him off from his work, *Math. xii. 48*.

2. He confirms the commission granted this tribe to minister in holy things, which was the recompense of their zeal and fidelity, *ver. 10*. (1.) They were to deal for God with the people, *They shall teach Jacob thy judgments and Israel thy laws*, both as preachers in their religious assemblies, reading and expounding the law, *Neh. viii. 7, 8*. And as judges determining doubtful and difficult cases that were brought before them, *2 Chron. xvii. 8, 9*. The priest's lips kept this knowledge for the use of the people who were to ask the law at their mouth, *Mal. ii. 7*. Even Haggai, a prophet, consulted the priests in a case of conscience, *Hag. ii. 12*. Note, Preaching is necessary not only for the first planting of Churches, but for the preserving and edifying of Churches when they are planted. See *Ezek. xlv. 13—24*. (2.) They were to deal for the people with God, in burning incense to the praise and glory of God, and offering sacrifices to make atonement for sin, and to obtain the divine favour. This was the work of the priests, but the Levites attended and assisted in it. Those that would have benefit by their incense and offerings must diligently and faithfully observe their instructions.

4. He prays for them, *ver. 11*. 1. That God would prosper them in their estates, and make that which was allotted them for their maintenance comfortable to them. *Bless, Lord, his substance*. The provision made for them was very plentiful, and came to them easily, and yet they could have no joy of it unless God blessed it to them, and since God himself was their portion, a particular blessing might be expected to attend that portion. *Bless, Lord, his virtue*; so some read it, Lord, increase thy graces in them, and make them more and more fit for their work. 2. That he would accept them in their services. *Accept the work of his hands, both for himself, and for the people for whom he ministers*. Acceptance with God is that which we should all aim at, and be ambitious of in all our devotions, whether men accept us or no, *2 Cor. v. 9*. and it is the most valuable blessing we can desire either for ourselves or others. 3. That he would take his part against all his enemies, *smite through the loins of them that rise against him*. He supposeth that God's ministers would have many enemies, some would hate their persons for their faithfulness, and would endeavour to do them a mischief; others would envy them their maintenance, and endeavour sacrilegiously to deprive them of it; others would oppose them in the execution of

of their office, and not submit to the sentence of the priests; and some would aim to overthrow the office itself. Now he prays that God would blast all such attempts, and return the mischief upon the heads of the authors. This prayer is a prophecy, that God would certainly reckon with those that are enemies to his ministers, and will keep up a ministry in his Church to the end of time, maugre all the designs of the gates of hell against it. Saul rose up against the Lord's priests, 1 Sam. xxii. 18. and it filled the measure of his sin.

12. ¶ And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders. 13. ¶ And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath. 14. And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon. 15. And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lastings hills. 16. And for the precious things of the earth, and fulness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren. 17. His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together, to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.

Here is, 1. The blessing of Benjamin, ver. 12. Benjamin is put next to Levi, because the temple where the priests' work lay was just upon the edge of the lot of this tribe; and it is put before Joseph, because of the dignity of Jerusalem (part of which was in this tribe) above Samaria, which was in the tribe of Ephraim, and because Benjamin adhered to the house of David, and to the temple of the Lord, when the rest of the tribes deserted both with Jeroboam. (1.) Benjamin is here called the *beloved of the Lord*, as the father of this tribe was Jacob's beloved son, the *son of his right hand*. Note, Those are blessed indeed that are beloved of the Lord. Saul the first king, and Paul the great apostle, were both of this tribe. (2.) He is here assured of the divine protection, he shall *dwell safely*. Note, Those are safe whom God loves, Psal. xci. 1. (3.) It is here intimated, that the temple in which God would dwell should be built in the borders of this tribe. Jerusalem, the holy city, was in the lot of this tribe, *Jos. xviii. 28*. and though Zion the city of David, is supposed to belong to Judah, yet mount Moriah, on which the temple was built, was in Benjamin's lot. God is therefore said to dwell *between his shoulders*. And by this means Benjamin was covered all the day long under the protection of the sanctuary, (Psal. cxxv. 2.) which is often spoken of as a place of refuge, *Psal. xxvii. 4, 5. Neh. vi. 10*. Benjamin dwelling by the temple of God *dwelt in safety by him*. Note, it is a happy thing to be in the neighbourhood of the temple. The situation of Benjamin, it is likely was the only thing that kept that tribe tight with Judah to the divine institutions, when the other ten tribes apostatized. Those have corrupt and wicked hearts indeed, who the nearer they are to the church, are the further from God.

2. The blessing of Joseph, including both Manasseh and Ephraim: in Jacob's blessing, *Gen. xlviii.* that of Joseph is the largest, and so it is here: and from thence Moses here borrows the title he gives to Joseph, *ver. 16.* that he was *separated from his brethren*, or, as it might be read, a Nazarite among them, both in regard of his piety, wherein it appears by many instances he excelled them all; and of his dignity in Egypt where he was both their ruler and benefactor; his brethren separated him from them by making him a slave, but God distinguished him from them by making him a prince.

Now the blessings here prayed for and prophesied of for this tribe, are great plenty and great power.

1. *Great plenty*, ver. 13, 14, 15, 16. In general, *Blessed of the Lord be his land*. They were very fruitful countries that fell into the lot of Ephraim and Manasseh, yet Moses prays they might be watered with the blessing of God, which makes rich, and on which all fruitfulness doth depend. Now, 1. He instanceth in many particulars which he prays may contribute to the wealth and abundance of these two tribes, looking up to the Creator for the benefit and serviceableness of all the inferior creatures, for they are all that to us which he makes them to be. He prays, (1.) For *seasonable rains*, and dews, *the precious things of heaven*, and so precious they are, though but fair water, that without them the fruits of the earth would all fail and be cut off. (2.) For *plentiful springs*, which help to make the earth fruitful, called here *the deep that coucheth beneath*: both are the *riches of God*, *Psal. lxxv. 9*. for he is the father of the rain; *Job xxxviii. 28*. and he made particularly the *fountains of waters*, *Rev. xiv. 7*. (3.) For the *benign influences* of the heavenly bodies; *ver. 14.* for the *precious fruits*, (the word signifies that which is most excellent, and the best in its kind) *put forth by the quickening heat of the sun*, and the cooling moisture of the moon. Let them have the yearly fruits in their several months, according to the course of nature, in one month olives, in another dates, &c. So some understand it. (4.) For the fruitfulness even of their hills and mountains, which in other countries used to be barren, *ver. 15.* let them have the *chief things of the ancient mountains*, and if the mountains be fruitful, the fruits of them will be the first and best ripened: They are called ancient mountains, not because prior in time to other mountains, but because, like the first-born, they were superior in worth and excellency; and lasting hills, not only because as other mountains they were immovable, *Hab. iii. 6*. but because the fruitfulness of them should continue. (5.) For the products of the lower grounds, *ver. 16.* For the *precious things of the earth*. Though the earth itself seem an useless, worthless lump of matter, yet there are precious things produced out of it, for the support and comfort of human life, *Job xxviii. 5.* out of it cometh bread, because out of it came our bodies, and to it they must return: But what are the *precious things of the earth* to a soul that came from God, and must return to him? or what is its fulness to the fulness that is in Christ, whence we receive grace for grace? and so make these precious things here prayed to be figures of *spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ*, the gifts, graces, and comforts of the Spirit.

2. He crowns all with the good-will, or favourable acceptance of him

that *dwelt in the bush*, ver. 16. i. e. of God, that God who appeared to Moses in the bush that burned and was not consumed, (*Exod. iii. 2*) to give him his commission for the bringing of Israel out of Egypt. Though God's glory appeared there but for a while, yet it is said to dwell there, because it continued as long as there was occasion for it: *The good will the Shechinah in the bush*; so it might be read, for Shechinah signifies that which *dwelleth*; and though it was but a little while a dweller in the bush, yet it continued to dwell with the people of Israel. *My dweller in the bush*; so it should be rendered: that was an appearance of the divine Majesty to Moses only, in token of the particular interest he had in God, which he desires to improve for the good of this tribe. Many a time God had appeared to Moses, but now he is just dying he seems to have the most pleasing remembrance of that which was the first time, when his acquaintance with the visions of the Almighty first began, and his correspondence with heaven was first settled, that was a time of love never to be forgotten. It was at the bush that God declared himself *the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, and so confirmed the promise made to the fathers, that promise which reached as far as the resurrection of the body and eternal life, as appears by our Saviour's argument from it, *Luke xx. 37*. so that when he prays for the good-will of him that *dwelt in the bush*, he has an eye to the covenant then and there renewed, on which all our hopes of God's favour must be bottomed. Now he concludes this large blessing with a prayer for the favour and good-will of God. Because that is the fountain and spring-head of all these blessings, they are the gifts of God's good-will, they are so to his own people, whatever they are to others. Indeed when Ephraim (a descendant from Joseph) slid back from God, as a *backsliding heifer*, those fruits of his country were so far from being the gifts of God's good-will, that they were intended but to fatten him for the slaughter, as a *lamb in a large place*, *Hos. iv. 16, 17*. 2. Because that is the comfort and sweetness of all these blessings; then we have joy of them when we taste God's good-will in them. 3. Because that is better than all these, infinitely better; for if we have but the favour and good-will of God we are happy, and may be easy in the want of all these things; and may rejoice in the God of our salvation, *though the fig-tree do not blossom, and there be no fruit in the vine*, *Hab. iii. 17, 18*.

2. Great power Joseph is here blessed with, ver. 17. Here are three instances of this power foretold. 1. His authority among his brethren. *His glory is like the firstling of his bullock*, or young bull, which is a rarely creature and therefore formerly used as an emblem of royal majesty. Joshua that was to succeed Moses was of the tribe of Ephraim the son of Joseph, and his glory was indeed illustrious, and he was an honour to his tribe. In Ephraim was the royal city of the ten tribes afterwards. And of Manasseh were Gideon, Jephthah, and Jair, who were all ornaments and blessings to their country. Some think he is compared to the firstling of the bullock, because the birth-right which Reuben lost devolved upon Joseph, 1 *Chron. v. 1, 2*. and to the firstling of his bullock, because Bathan, which was in the lot of Manasseh, was famous for bulls and cows, *Psal. xxii. 12. Amos iv. 1*. 2. His force against his enemies, and a victory over them: *his horns are like the horns of an unicorn*, i. e. The forces he shall bring into the field shall be very strong and formidable, and with them he shall push the people, i. e. He shall overcome all that stand in his way. It appears by the Ephraimites' contests both with Gideon, *Judg. viii. 1*. and with Jephthah, *Judg. xii. 1*. that they were a warlike tribe and fierce. Yet we find the children of Ephraim, when they had forsaken the covenant of God, though they were armed, turning back in the day of battle, *Psal. lxxviii. 9, 10*. for though here pronounced strong and bold as unicorns, when God was departed from them they became as weak as other men. 3. The numbers of his people, in which Ephraim, though the younger house, exceeded Jacob having in the foresight of the same thing crossed hands, *Gen. xlviii. 19*. *They are the ten thousands of Ephraim and the thousands of Manasseh*. Jonathan's Targum applies it to the ten thousands of Canaanites which Joshua conquered who were of the tribe of Ephraim, and the thousands of Midianites whom Gideon conquered, who was of the tribe of Manasseh. And the gloss of the Jerusalem Targum upon the former part of this verse is observable; that as the firstlings of the young bullock were never to be worked, nor could the unicorn ever be tamed, so Joseph should ever continue free; and so they had done if they had not by sin told themselves.

18. ¶ And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and Issachar, in thy tents. 19. They shall call the people unto the mountain, there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand. 20. ¶ And of Gad he said, Blessed be he that enlarged Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head. 21. And he provided the first part for himself, because there, in a portion of the law-giver, was he seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments with Israel.

Here is, 1. The blessings of Zebulun and Issachar put together, for they were both the sons of Jacob by Leah, and by their lot in Canaan they were neighbours; it is foretold,

1. That they should both have a comfortable settlement and employment, *ver. 18*. Zebulun must rejoice, for he shall have cause to rejoice; and Moses prays he may have in his going out, either to war, for *Zebulun jeopardized their lives in the high places of the field*, *Judg. v. 18*. Or rather to sea, for Zebulun was a *haven of ships*, *Gen. xlix. 13*. And Issachar must rejoice in his tents, i. e. in his business at home, his husbandry, to which the men of that tribe generally confined themselves, because they saw that the rest was good, and when the sea was rough, the land was pleasant, *Gen. xlix. 14, 15*. Observe here, 1. That the providence of God as it variously appoints the bounds of men's habitations, some in the city, and some in the country, some in the sea-ports, and some in the inland towns, so it wisely disposeth men's inclinations to different employments for the good of the public, as each member of the body is situated and qualified for the service of the whole. The genius of some men leads them to a book, of others to the sea, of others to the sword; some are inclined to rural affairs, others to trade, and some have mechanic heads; and it is well it is so; *If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?* 1 *Cor. xii. 17*. It was for the common good of Israel, that the men of Zebulun were merchants, and that the men of Issachar were husbandmen. 2. That whatever our place and business is, it is our wisdom and duty to accommodate ourselves to it, and it is a great happiness to be well pleased with it. Let Zebulun rejoice in his going out, let him thank God for the gains and make the best of the losses and inconveniences of his merchandize, and not despise the means,

meanings, or envy the quietness of Issachar's tents; let Issachar rejoice in his tents, let him be well pleased with the retirements, and content with the small profits of his country-seat, and not grudge that he has not Zebulun's pleasure of travelling and profit of trading. Every business has both its conveniences and inconveniences, and therefore whatever providence has made our business, we ought to bring our minds to it; and it is really a great happiness, whatever our lot is, to be easy with it. *This is the gift of God*, Eccl. v. 19.

2. That they should both be serviceable in their places to the honour of God, and the interests of religion in the nation, ver. 19. *They shall call the people to the mountain*, i. e. to the temple, which Moses foresaw should be built upon a mountain. I see not why this should be confined (as it is by most interpreters) to Zebulun, if both Zebulun and Issachar receive the comfort of their respective employments, why may we not suppose that they both took care to give God the glory of them? Two things they shall do for God. 1. They shall invite others to his service; *call the people to the mountain*. (1.) Zebulun shall improve his acquaintance and commerce with the neighbour-nations, to whom he goes out, for this noble purpose, to propagate religion among them, and to invite them into the service of the God of Israel. Note, Men of great business or large conversation, should wisely and zealously endeavour to recommend the practice of serious godliness to those with whom they converse, and among whom their business lies. Such are blessed, for they are blessings. It were well if the enlargement of trade with foreign countries might be made to contribute to the spreading of the gospel. This prophecy concerning Zebulun perhaps looks as far as the preaching of Christ and his apostles, which began in the land of Zebulun, *Matth. iv. 14, 15*, then they *called the people to the mountain*, i. e. to the kingdom of the Messiah, which is called the *mountain of the Lord's house*, *Isa. ii. 2*. (2.) Issachar that tarries at home and dwells in tents shall call upon his neighbours to go up to the sanctuary, at the times appointed for their solemn feasts; either because they should be more zealous and forward than their neighbours, (and it has been often observed, that though they that with Zebulun dwell in the havens of ships, which are places of conference, have commonly more of the light of religion, they that with Issachar dwell in tents in the country, have more of the life and heat of it) and may with their zeal provoke those to a holy emulation that have more knowledge, *Psal. cxxii. 1*. Or, because they were more observant of the times appointed for their feasts than others were. One of the Chaldee paraphrasts reads the foregoing verse, *Rejoice, Issachar, in the tents of thy schools*, supposing they would many of them be scholars, and would use their learning for that purpose, according to the revolutions of the year to give notice of the times of the feasts, for almanacs were not then so common as they are now. And Onkelos more particularly, *Rejoice, Issachar, when thou goest to compute the times of the solemnities at Jerusalem; for then the tribes of Israel shall be gathered to the mountain of the house of the sanctuary*. So he reads the beginning of this verse; and many think this the meaning of that character of the men of Issachar in David's time, *That they had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do*, 1 Chron. xii. 32. And the character which follows, ver. 33, of the men of Zebulun, that they were such as went forth to battle, expert in war, perhaps may explain the blessing of that tribe here. Note, Those that have not opportunity as Zebulun had of bringing into the Church those that are without, may yet be very serviceable to its interest, by helping to quicken, encourage, and build up those that are within. And it is good work to call people to God's ordinances, to put those in remembrance that are forgetful, and to stir up those that are slothful; who will follow, but care not to lead.

1. They shall not only invite others to the service of God, but they shall abound in it themselves, *there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness*. They shall not send others to the temple, and stay at home themselves, under pretence that they cannot leave their business, but when they stir up others to go speedily to pray before the Lord, they shall say, *we will go also*, as it is *Zech. viii. 21*. Note, The good we exhort others to we should ourselves be examples of. And when they come to the temple, they shall not appear before the Lord empty, but shall bring for the honour and service of God according as he has prospered them, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. (1.) It is here foretold that both these tribes should grow rich; Zebulun that goes abroad shall *rejoice of the abundance of the seas* which are full breasts to the merchants, while Issachar that tarries at home shall enrich himself with *treasures hid in the sand*; either the fruits of the earth; or the underground treasures of metals and minerals; or (because the word for sand here signifies properly the sand of the sea) the rich things thrown up by the sea, for the lot of Issachar reached to the sea-side. Perhaps their success in *calling the people to the mount*, is intimated by their *rejoicing of the abundance of the seas*, for we have a like phrase used for the bringing in of the nations to the Church, *Isa. lx. 5*. *The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee*, and ver. 16. *Thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles*. It is foretold, (2.) That these tribes being thus enriched should *consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth*, Micah iv. 13. *That the merchandise of Zebulun, and the hire of Issachar should be holiness to the Lord*, *Isa. xxiii. 18*, for they shall out of it *offer sacrifices of righteousness*, i. e. sacrifices according to the law. Note, We must serve and honour God with what we have; and where he sows plentifully he expects to reap accordingly. Those that *suck of the abundance of the seas, and of the treasures hid in the sand*, ought to offer sacrifices of righteousness proportionable.

2. The blessing of the tribe of Gad comes next, ver. 20, 21. This was one of the tribes that was already seated on that side Jordan where Moses now was. Now,

1. He foretels what this tribe would be, ver. 20. 1. That it would be enlarged, as at present it had a spacious allotment: and he gives God the glory both of its present and of its future extent. *Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad*. We find how this tribe was enlarged by their success in a war, which it seems they carried on very religiously against the Hagarites, 1 Chron. v. 19, 20—22. Note, God is to have the glory of all our enlargements. 2. That it would be a valiant and victorious tribe; would, if let alone, dwell secure and fearless as a lion; but if provoked, would, like a lion, *tear the arm with the crown of the head*; i. e. would pull in pieces all that stood in his way, both the arm, that is, the strength, and the crown of the head, that is, the policy and authority of his enemies. In David's time there were Gadites whose faces were *as the faces of lions*, 1 Chron. xii. 28. Some reckon Jehu to be of this tribe, because the first mention we have of him is at Ramoth-Gilead, which belonged to Gad, and they think this may refer to his valiant acts.

2. He commends this tribe for what they had done and were now doing, ver. 21. (1.) They had done wisely for themselves, when they chose their lot with the first, in a country already conquered. *He provided the first part for himself*; though he had a concern for his brethren, yet his charity began at home, and he was willing to see himself first served, first settled. The Gadites were the first and most active movers for an allotment on that side Jordan, and therefore are still mentioned before Reubenites in the history of that affair, *Numb. xxxii. 2*. And thus, while the other tribes had their portions assigned them by Joshua the conqueror, Gad and his compa-

nions, had theirs from Moses the law-giver, and in it they were seated by law; or, (as the word is) covered or protected by a special providence which watched over them that were left behind; while the men of war went forward with their brethren. Note, *Men will praise thee when thou dost well for thyself*, when thou providest first for thyself, as Gad did, *Psal. xlix. 18*. And God will praise thee when thou dost well for thy soul, which is indeed thyself, and providest the first part, for that is a portion for the lawgiver. (2.) They were now doing honestly and bravely for their brethren, for they *came with the heads of the people*, before whom they went armed over Jordan, to execute the justice of the Lord, upon the Canaanites under the conduct of Joshua, to whom we afterwards find they solemnly vowed obedience, *Josh. i. 12—16*. This was what they undertook to do when they had their lot assigned them, *Numb. xxxii. 27*. This they did, *Josh. iv. 12*. And when the wars of Canaan were ended Joshua dismissed them with a blessing, *Josh. xxii. 7*. Note, It is a blessed and honourable thing to be helpful to our brethren in their affairs; and particularly to assist in executing the justice of the Lord, by suppressing that which is provoking to him; this was it that was counted to Phinehas for righteousness.

22. ¶ And of Dan he said, Dan is a lion's whelp; he shall leap from Bashan. 23. ¶ And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the LORD: possess thou the west and the south. 24. ¶ And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. 25. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.

Here is, 1. The blessing of Dan, ver. 22. Jacob in his blessing had compared him to a serpent for subtilty; Moses compares him to a lion for courage and resolution: and what could stand before those that had the head of a serpent and the heart of a lion? He is compared to lions that leapt from Bashan, a mountain noted for fierce lions, from whence they came down to leap upon their prey in the plains. This may refer either, (1.) To the particular victories obtained by Samson (who was of this tribe) over the Philistines, and when the Spirit of the Lord began to move in the camp of Dan, when he was very young, as a lion's whelp, and who in his attacks upon the Philistines surprised them, and overpowered them by main strength, as a lion doth his prey: and one of his first exploits was the rending of a lion. Or, (2.) To a more general achievement of that tribe, when a party of them upon information brought them of the security of Laish, which lay in the farthest part of the land of Canaan from them, surprised it, and soon made themselves masters of it. See *Judg. xviii. 24*. And the mountains of Bashan lying not far from that city, probably from thence they made their descent upon it; and therefore are here said to leap from Bashan.

2. The blessing of Naphtali, ver. 23. He looks upon this tribe with wonder, and applauds it. O Naphtali, thou art happy, thou shalt be so, mayest thou be ever so! Three things make up the happiness of this tribe. 1. Be thou *satisfied with favour*. Some understand it of the favour of men, their good-will, and good word: Jacob had described this tribe to be generally courteous, obliging people, giving goodly words, as the loving hind, *Gen. xlix. 21*. Now what should they get by being so? Moses here tells them they should have an interest in the affections of their neighbours, and be satisfied with favour. They that are loving shall be beloved. But others understand it of the favour of God; and with good reason: for that only is the favour that is satisfying to the soul, and puts true gladness into the heart. Those are happy indeed, that have the favour of God: and those shall have it, that place their satisfaction in it, and reckon in having that they have enough and desire no more. (2.) Be thou *full with the blessing of the Lord*, i. e. not only with those good things that are the fruits of that blessing, corn, and wine, and oil, but with the blessing itself; i. e. the grace of God, according to his promise and covenant. Those that have that blessing, may well reckon themselves full, they need nothing else to make them happy. The portion of the tribe of Naphtali (the Jews say) was so fruitful, and the product so forward, though it lay north, that they of that tribe were generally the first that brought their first-fruits to the temple; and so they had first the blessing from the priest, which was the blessing of the Lord. Capernaum, in which Christ chiefly resided, lay in this tribe. 3. Be thou in possession of the sea and the south; so it may be read, i. e. of that sea which shall lie south of thy lot, that was the sea of Galilee; which we so often read of in the gospels, directly north of which the lot of this tribe lay; and which was of great advantage to this tribe, witness the wealth of Capernaum and Bethsaida, which lay within this tribe, and upon the shore of that sea. See how Moses was guided by a spirit of prophecy in these blessings; for before the lot was cast into the lap, he foretold and foretold how the disposal of it would be.

3. The blessing of Asher, ver. 24, 25. Four things he prays for, and prophesieth concerning this tribe, which carries blessedness in its name; for Leah called the father of it Asher, saying, *Happy am I*, *Gen. xxx. 13*. 1. The increase of their numbers. They were now a numerous tribe, *Numb. xxvi. 47*. Let it be more so; *Let Asher be blessed with children*. Note, Children, especially children of the covenant, are blessings, not burdens. 2. Their interest in their neighbours; *Let him be acceptable to his brethren*. Note, It is a very desirable thing to have the love and good-will of those we live among; it is what we should pray to God for, who has all hearts in his hand; and what we should endeavour to gain by meekness and humility, and a readiness, as we have ability and opportunity, to do good to all men. 3. The richness of their land. (1.) Above ground; *Let him dip his foot in oil*, i. e. Let him have such a plenty of it in his lot, that he may not only anoint his head with it, but, if he pleases, wash his feet in it, which was not commonly done; yet we find our blessed Saviour so acceptable to his brethren, that his feet were anointed with the most precious ointment, *Luke vii. 46*. (2.) Under-ground: *Thy shoes shall be iron and brass*, i. e. Thou shalt have great plenty of these metals (mines of them) in thy own ground, which by an uncommon blessing shall have both its surface and its bowels rich; or if they had them not products of their own country, they should have them imported from abroad: for the lot of this tribe lay on the sea coast. The Chaldee paraphrasts understand it figuratively; thou shalt be strong and bright, as iron and brass. 4. The continuance of their strength and vigour; *as thy days, so shall thy strength be*. Many paraphrase it thus; The strength of thy old age shall be like that of thy youth; thou shalt not feel a decay, nor be the worse for the wearing, but shalt renew thy youth; as if not thy shoes only, but thy bones were iron and brass. The day is often in scripture put for the events of the day; and taking it so here, it is a promise that God would graciously support them under their trials and troubles, whatever they were. And so it is a promise sure to all the spiri-

tual seed of Abraham, that God will wisely proportion their graces and comforts to the services and sufferings he calls them out to. Have they work appointed them? they shall have strength to do it. Have they burdens appointed them? they shall have strength to bear them; and never be tempted above that they are able. Faithful is he that has thus promised, and hath caused us to hope in this promise.

26. ¶ *There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky.* 27. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, Destroy them. 28. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine, also his heaven shall drop down dew. 29. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

These are the last words of all that ever Moses, that great writer, that great dictator, either wrote himself, or were written for him, and they are therefore very remarkable; and no doubt, we shall find them very improveable. Moses, the man of God, (who had as much reason as ever any mere man had to know both) with his last breath magnifies both the God of Israel, and the Israel of God. They are both incomparable in his eye; and we are sure in this judgment of both, his eye did not wax dim.

1. No god like the God of Israel: None of the gods of the nations were capable of doing that for their worshippers which Jehovah did for him, *ver. 26. There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun.* Note, When we are expecting that God should bless us in doing well for us, we must bless him by speaking well of him: and one of the most awful ways of praising God, is by acknowledging that there is none like him. Now, 1. This was the honour of Israel: every nation boasted of its god, but none had such a God to boast as Israel had. (2.) It was their happiness, that they were taken into covenant with such a God. Two things he takes notice of as proofs of the incontestible pre-eminence of the God of Jeshurun above all other gods. 1. His sovereign power and authority; *he rides upon the heavens*, and with the greatest state and magnificence on the skies. *Riding on the heavens* notes his greatness and glory, in which he manifests himself to the upper world, and the use he makes of the influences of heaven, and the products of the clouds, in bringing to pass his own counsels in this lower world: he manages and directs them as a man doth the horse he rides on. When he has any thing to do for his people, he *rides upon the heavens* to do it: for he doth it swiftly and strongly, no enemy can either anticipate or obstruct the progress of him that rides on the heavens. 2. His boundless eternity; he is the eternal God, and his arms are *everlasting*, *ver. 27.* The gods of the heathen were but lately invented, and would shortly perish: but the God of Jeshurun is eternal, he was before all worlds, and will be when time and days shall be no more. See *I Job. i. 12.*

2. No people like the Israel of God. Having pronounced each tribe happy, in the close he pronounces all together very happy; so happy in all respects, that there was no nation under the sun comparable to them, *ver. 29. Happy art thou, O Israel*, a people whose God is the Lord; on that account truly happy, and *none like unto thee.* If Israel honour God as a non-such God, he will favour them, so as to make them a non-such people, the envy of all their neighbours, and the joy of all their well-wishers. *Who is like unto thee, O people? Behold thou art fair, my love!* saith Christ of his spouse: To which she presently returns, *Behold, thou art fair, my beloved.* What one nation (no not all the nations together) is like thy people Israel? 2 Sam. vii. 23. What is here said of the Church of Israel and the honours and privileges of it, is certainly to be applied to the Church of the first born, that are written in heaven: The Christian Church is the Israel of God, as the apostle calls it, *Gal. vi. 16.* on which there shall be peace, and which is dignified above all societies in the world, as Israel was.

1. Never was people so well seated, and sheltered, *ver. 27. The eternal God is thy refuge?* Or, as the word signifies, *thy habitation or mansion-house*, in whom thou art safe and easy, and at rest, as a man in his own house. Every Israelite indeed, is at home in God; the soul returns to him, and reposing in him as its resting-place, *Psal. cxvi. 7.* its hiding-place, *Psal. xxxii. 7.* And they that make him their habitation, shall have all the comforts and benefits of a habitation to him, *Psal. xci. 1.* Moses had an eye to God as the habitation of Israel, when they were wandering in the wilderness, *Psal. xc. 1. Lord, thou hast been my dwelling place in all generations.* And now they were going to settle in Canaan; they must not change their habitation; still they will need, and still they shall have the eternal God for their dwelling-place, and without him Canaan itself would be a wilderness, and the land of darkness.

2. Never was people so well supported and borne up; underneath are the everlasting arms, i. e. the almighty power of God is engaged for the protection and consolation of all that trust in him, in their greatest straits and distresses, and under their heaviest burdens. The everlasting arms shall support, (1.) The interests of the Church in general, that they shall not sink or be run down; underneath the Church is that rock of ages on which it is built, and against which the gates of hell shall never prevail, *Matth. xvi. 18.* (2.) The spirits of particular believers, so that though they may be oppressed, they shall not be overwhelmed by any trouble. How low soever the people of God are at any time brought, everlasting arms are underneath them to keep the spirit from sinking, from fainting, and the faith from failing, even when they are pressed above measure. The everlasting covenant, and the everlasting consolations, that flow from it, are indeed everlasting arms, with which believers have been wonderfully sustained, and kept cheerful in the worst of times; divine grace is sufficient for them, *2 Cor. xii. 9.*

3. Never was people so well commanded and led on to battle; *He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee* by his almighty power, which will make room for thee, and by a commission which will bear thee out, he shall say, *Destroy them.* They were now entering upon a land that was in the full possession of a strong and formidable people, and who being its first planters, looked upon themselves as its rightful owners; how shall Israel justify, and how shall they accomplish, the expulsion of them? (1.) God will give them a commission to destroy the Canaanites, and that will justify them, and bear them out in it, against all the world. He that is sovereign Lord of all lives and all lands, not only allowed and permitted, but expressly commanded and appointed the children of Israel both to take possession of the land of Canaan, and to put to the sword the people of Canaan, which being

thus authorized they might not only lawfully, but honourably do without incurring the least stain, or imputation of theft by the one, or murder by the other. (2.) God will give them power and ability to destroy them; nay, he will in effect do it to their hands: he will *thrust out the enemy from before them*; for the very fear of Israel shall put them to flight. God drove out the heathen to plant his people, *Psal. xlv. 2.* Thus believers are more than conquerors over their spiritual enemies, through Christ that loved them. The captain of our salvation *thrust out the enemy from before us*, when he overcame the world, and spoiled principalities and powers on the cross: and the word of command to us is, *Destroy them*; pursue the victory, and you shall divide the spoil.

4. Never was people so well secured and protected, *ver. 28. Israel shall then dwell in safety alone.* Those that dwell in God, and make his name their strong tower, dwell in safety; the place of their defence is the mountains of rocks, *Isa. xxxiii. 16.* They shall dwell in safety alone. (1.) Though alone; though they contract no alliances with their neighbours, nor have any reason to expect help or succour from any of them; yet they shall dwell in safety; they shall really be safe; and they shall think themselves so. (2.) Because alone; they shall dwell in safety, as long as they continue pure and unmixt with the heathen; a singular and peculiar people. Their distinction from other nations, though it made them like a speckled bird, *Jer. xii. 9.* and exposed them to the ill-will of those about them, yet it was really their preservation from the mischief their neighbours wished them, as it kept them under the divine protection. All that keep close to God, shall be kept safe by him. It is promised, that in the kingdom of Christ *Israel shall dwell safely*, *Jer. xxiii. 6.*

5. Never was people so well provided for; the fountain of Jacob, i. e. the present generation of that people, which is as the fountain to all the streams that shall hereafter descend and be derived from it, shall now presently be fixed upon a good land. The eye of Jacob (so it might be read, for the same word signifies a fountain and an eye) is upon the land of corn and wine, i. e. where they now lay encamped, they had Canaan in their eye, it was just before their faces, on the other side the river, and they would have it in their hands, and under their feet quickly. This land they had their eye upon was blessed both with the fatness of the earth, and the dew of heaven; it was a land of corn and wine, substantial and useful products: also his heavens (as if the heavens were particularly designed to be blessings to that land) shall drop down dew, without which, though the soil were ever so good, the corn and wine should soon fail. Every Israelite indeed has his eye, the eye of faith, upon the better country; the heavenly Canaan, which is richly replenished with better things than corn and wine.

6. Never was people so well helped; if they were in any strait, God himself rode upon the heavens for their help, *ver. 26.* And they were a people saved by the Lord, *ver. 29.* If they were in danger of any harm, or in want of any good, they had an eternal God to go to, an almighty power to trust to; nothing could hurt those whom God helped, nor was it possible that people should perish which was saved by the Lord. They that are added to the gospel Israel, are such as shall be saved, *Acts ii. 47.*

7. Never was people so well armed; God himself was the shield of their help, by whom they were armed defensively, and sufficiently guarded against all assaults: and he was the sword of their excellency, by whom they were armed offensively, and made both formidable and successful in all their wars. God is called the sword of their excellency, because in fighting for them, he made them to excel other people: or because in all he did for them, he had an eye to his sanctuary among them, which is called the excellency of Jacob, *Psal. xlvii. 4. Ezek. xxiv. 21. Amos vi. 8.* Those in whose hearts is the excellency of holiness, having God himself for their shield and sword, are defended by the whole armour of God; his word is their sword, and faith in it is their shield, *Eph. vi. 16, 17.*

8. Never was people so well assured of victory over their enemies; *They shall be found liars unto thee*; i. e. shall be forced to submit to thee sore against their will, so that it will be but a counterfeit submission; yet the point shall be gained, for thou shalt tread upon their necks, (so the LXX.) which we find done, *Josh. x. 24.* Thou shalt tread down their strongholds, be they ever so high; and trample upon their palaces and temples, though esteemed ever so sacred. If thine enemies be found liars for thee (so some read it) Thou shalt tread upon their high places; if they will not be held by the bonds of leagues and treaties, they shall be broken by the force of war. Thus shall the God of peace tread Satan under the feet of all believers, and shall do it shortly, *Rom. xvi. 20.*

Now lay all this together, and then you will say, *Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people!* Thrice happy the people whose God is the Lord.

C H A P. XXXIV.

Having read how Moses finished his testimony, we are told here how he immediately after finished his life. This chapter could not be written by Moses himself, but was added by Joshua or Eleazar, or, as Bishop Patrick conjectures, by Samuel, who was a prophet, and wrote by divine authority what he found in the records of Joshua, and his successors the judges. We have had an account of his dying words, here we have an account of his dying work, and that is work we must all do shortly, and it had need be well done. Here is, 1. The view Moses had of the land of Canaan just before he died, *ver. 1—4.* 2. His death and burial, *ver. 5, 6.* 3. His age, *ver. 7.* 4. Israel's mourning for him, *ver. 8.* 5. His successor, *ver. 9.* 6. His character, *ver. 10—12.*

1. AND Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho: and the LORD shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan. 2. And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea. 3. And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm-trees, unto Zoar. 4. And the LORD said unto him, This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.

Here is, 1. Moses climbing upwards towards heaven, as high as the top of Pisgah, there to die, for that was the place appointed, *chap. xxxii. 49, 50.* Israel lay encamped upon the flat grounds in the plains of Moab, and from thence he went up according to order to the mountain of Nebo; to

the highest point or ridge of that mountain which was called Pisgah, *ver.* 1. Pisgah is an appellative name for all such pikes. It should seem Moses went up alone to the top of Pisgah, alone without help; a sign that his natural force was not abated, when on the last day of his life he could walk up to the top of a high hill without such supporters as once he had when his hands were heavy, *Exod.* xvii. 12. Alone without company; when he had made an end of blessing Israel, we may suppose he solemnly took leave of Joshua and Eleazer, and the rest of his friends, who probably brought him to the foot of the hill, but then he gave such a charge as Abraham gave to his servants at the foot of another hill; *Tarry ye here while I go yonder and die*; they must not see him die, because they must not know of his sepulchre. But whether this were so or not he went up to the top of Pisgah. (1.) To shew that he was willing to die: when he knew the place of his death he was so far from declining it, that he cheerfully mounted a steep hill to come at it. Note, Those that through grace are well acquainted with another world, and have been much conversant with it, need not be afraid to leave this. (2.) To shew that he looked upon death as his ascension. The soul of a man, of a good man, when it leaves the body goes upward, *Ecc.* iii. 21. in conformity to which motion of the soul, the body of Moses shall go along with it as far upwards as its earth will carry it. When God's servants are sent for out of the world, the summons runs thus, *Go up and die.*

2. Moses looking downward again towards this earth, to see the earthly Canaan into which he must never enter, but therein by faith looking forwards to the heavenly Canaan into which he should now presently enter. God had threatened that he should not come into the possession of Canaan, and that threatening is fulfilled: But he had also promised that he should have a prospect of it, and the promise is here performed, *The Lord shewed him all that good land, ver.* 1.

1. If he went up alone to the top of Pisgah, yet he was not alone, for the Father was with him, *John* xvi. 32. If a man have any friends, he will have them about him when he lies a dying. But if, either through God's providence, or their unkindness, it should so happen, that we should then be alone, we need fear no evil, if the great and good shepherd be with us, *Psal.* xxiii. 4.

2. Though his sight was very good, and he had all the advantage of high ground he could desire for the prospect, yet he could not have seen what he now saw, all Canaan from end to end, (reckoned about 160 miles) and from side to side (reckoned about 50 or 60 miles) if his sight had not been miraculously assisted and enlarged, and therefore it is said, *The Lord shewed it him.* Note, All the pleasant prospects we have of the better country, we are beholden to the grace of God for; it is he that gives the Spirit of Wisdom as well as the Spirit of Revelation, the eye as well as the object. This sight God here gave Moses of Canaan, probably, the devil designed to mimic and pretended to out-do, when in an airy phantom he shewed to our Saviour, whom he had placed, like Moses, upon an exceeding high mountain, all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, not gradually as here, first one country and then another, but all in a moment of time.

2. He saw it at a distance; such a sight the Old Testament saints had of the kingdom of the Messiah, they saw it afar off: thus Abraham long before this saw Christ's day; and being fully persuaded of it embraced it in the promise, leaving others to embrace it in the performance, *Heb.* xi. 13. Such a sight believers now have through grace of the bliss and glory of their future state. The word and ordinances are to them what mount Pisgah was to Moses, from them they have comfortable prospects of the glory to be revealed, and rejoice in hope of it.

4. He saw it, but must never enjoy it. As God sometimes takes his people away from the evil to come, so at other times he takes them away from the good to come in the Church in this world. Glorious things are spoken of the kingdom of Christ in the latter days, its advancement, enlargement, and flourishing state; we foresee it, but we are not like to live to see it. Those that shall come after us we hope will enter that promised land, which is a comfort to us when we find our own carcases falling in this wilderness. See *2 Kings* vii. 2.

5. He saw all this just before his death. Sometimes God reserves the brightest discoveries of his grace to his people to be the support of their dying moments. Canaan was Immanuel's land, (*Isa.* viii. 8.) so that in viewing it he had a view of the blessing we enjoy by Christ: It was a type of heaven, *Heb.* xi. 16. which faith is the substance and evidence of. Note, Those may leave this world with a great deal of cheerfulness that die in the faith of Christ, and in the hope of heaven, and with Canaan in their eye. Having thus seen the salvation of God we may well say, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.*

5. ¶ So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.

6. ¶ And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. 7. ¶ And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. 8. ¶ And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.

Here is, 1. The death of Moses, *ver.* 5. *Moses the servant of the Lord died.* God told him he must not go over Jordan, and though at first he prayed earnestly for the reversing of the sentence, yet God's answer to his prayer satisfied him, and now he spake no more of that matter, *Deut.* iii. 26. Thus our blessed Saviour prayed that the cup might pass from him, yet since it might not be acquiesced with, *Father thy will be done.* Moses had reason to desire to live a while longer in the world. He was old, it is true, but he had not yet attained to the years of the life of his fathers; his father Amram lived to be one hundred thirty-seven; his grandfather Kohath one hundred thirty-three; his great-grandfather Levi one hundred thirty-seven, *Exod.* vi. 16—20. And why must Moses, whose life was more serviceable than any of theirs, die at one hundred and twenty; especially since he felt not the decays of age, but was as fit for the service as ever? Israel could ill spare him at this time; his conduct and his converse with God would be as great a happiness to them in the conquest of Canaan as the courage of Joshua. It bore hard upon Moses himself, when he had gone through all the fatigues of the wilderness, to be prevented from enjoying the pleasures of Canaan: when he had borne the burden and heat of the day, to resign the honour of finishing the work to another; and that not his son, but his servant who must enter into his labours; we may suppose this against the grain to flesh and blood. But the man Moses was very meek; God will have it so, and he cheerfully submits. (1.) He is here called the servant

of the Lord, not only as a good man, all the saints are God's servants: but as an useful man, eminently useful, who had served God's counsels in bringing Israel out of Egypt, and leading them through the wilderness. It was more his honour to be the servant of the Lord than to be king in Jessurun. (2.) Yet he dies. Neither his piety nor his usefulness would exempt him from the stroke of death. God's servants must die that they may rest from their labours; receive their recompense and make room for others. When God's servants are removed, and must serve him no longer on earth, they go to serve him better, to serve him day and night in his temple. (3.) He dies in the land of Moab, short of Canaan, while as yet he and his people were in an unsettled condition, and not entered in their rest. In the heavenly Canaan there will be no more death. (4.) He dies according to the word of the Lord. At the mouth of the Lord: So the word is. The Jews say, God sucked his soul out of his body with a kiss. No doubt he died very easily (it was an *easy death*) there were no bands in his death; and he had in his death a most pleasing taste of the love of God to him; but that he died in the mouth of the Lord, means no more but that he died in compliance with the will of God. Note, The servants of the Lord, when they have done all their other work must die at last in obedience to their master, and be freely willing to go home whenever he sends for them, *Acts* xxi. 13.

2. His burial, *ver.* 6. It is a groundless conceit of some of the Jews, that Moses was translated to heaven as Elijah was, for it is expressly said he died and was buried; yet probably he was raised to meet Elias, to grace the solemnity of Christ's transfiguration. (1.) God himself buried him, viz. by the ministry of angels, which made this funeral though very private, yet very magnificent. Note, God takes care of the dead bodies of his servants; as their death is precious, so is their dust, not a grain of it shall be lost, but the covenant of it shall be remembered. When Moses was dead, God buried him, when Christ was dead God raised him, for the law of Moses was to have an end, but not the gospel of Christ; believers are dead to the law that they might be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, *Rom.* vii. 4. It should seem Michael, that is Christ, (as some think) had the burying of Moses, for by him the Mosaic ordinances were abolished and taken out of the way, nailed to his cross, and buried in his grave, *Col.* ii. 14. (2.) He was buried in a valley over against Beth-peor. How easily could the angels that buried him have conveyed him over Jordan and buried him with the patriarchs in the cave of Machpelah! But we must learn not to be over-solicitous about the place of our burial; if the soul be at rest with God, the matter is not great where the body rests. One of the Chaldee paraphrasts saith, he was buried over against Beth-peor, that whenever Baal-peor boasted of the Israelites being joined to him, the grave of Moses over-against his temple might be a check to him. 3. The particular place was not known lest the children of Israel, who were so very prone to idolatry, should have enshrined and worshipped the dead body of Moses, that great founder and benefactor of their nation. It is true, we read not among all the instances of their idolatry that they worshipped relicks, the reason of which perhaps was, because they were thus prevented from worshipping Moses, and so could not for shame worship any other. Some of the Jewish writers say, the body of Moses was concealed, that necromancers, who enquired of the dead, might not disquiet him, as the witch of Endor did Samuel, to bring him up; God would not have the name and memory of his servant Moses thus abused. Many think this was the contest between Michael and the devil about the body of Moses, mentioned *Jude* 9. The devil would make the place known that it might be a snare to the people, and Michael would not let him. Those therefore who are for giving divine honour to the relicks of departed saints, side with the devil against Michael our prince.

3. His age, *ver.* 7. His life was prolonged, (1.) To old age. He was one hundred and twenty years old, which though far short of the years of the patriarchs, yet much exceeded the years of most of his contemporaries, for the ordinary age of man was reduced to seventy, *Psal.* xc. 10. The years of the life of Moses were three forties; the first forty he lived a courtier, at ease and in honour in Pharaoh's court; the second forty he lived a poor desolate shepherd in Midian; the third forty he lived a king in Jessurun, in honour and power, but allayed with a great deal of care and toil; so changeable is the world we live in, and allayed with such a mixture: the world before us is unmixed and unchangeable. (2.) To a good old age. His eye was not dim, as Isaac's, *Gen.* xxviii. 1. and Jacob's, *Gen.* xlviii. 10. Nor was his natural force abated; there was no decay either of the strength of his body or of the vigour and activity of his mind, but he could still speak and write and walk as well as ever; his understanding as clear, and his memory as strong as ever. His visage was not wrinkled, say some of the Jewish writers; he had lost never a tooth say others; and many of them expound it of the shining of his face, *Exod.* xxxiv. 30. that it continued to the last. This was the general reward of his services; and it was in particular the effect of his extraordinary meekness, for that is a grace which is as much as any other health to the navel, and marrow to the bones. The moral law which was given by Moses, though its condemning power be vacated to true believers, yet its commands are still binding, and will be to the end of the world; the eye of them is not waxen dim, for they still discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, nor is their natural force or obligation abated, but still we are under the law to Christ.

4. The solemn mourning that there was for him, *ver.* 8. It is a debt owing to the surviving honour of deceased worthies to follow them with our tears, as those that loved and valued them, are sensible of our loss of them, and are truly humbled for those sins which had provoked God to deprive us of them; for penitential tears very fitly mix with these. Observe, 1. Who the mourners were, the children of Israel; they all conformed to the ceremony, whatever it was; though some of them perhaps that were ill-affected to his government were but mock-mourners. Yet we may suppose there were those among them who had formerly quarreled with him and his government, and perhaps had been of those that spake of stoning him, who now were sensible of their loss, and heartily lamented him when he was removed from them, who knew not how to value him while he was with them: Thus they that had murmured were made to learn doctrine, *Isa.* xxix. 24. Note, The loss of good men, especially good governors, is to be much lamented and laid to heart; those are stupid who do not consider it. 2. How long they mourned, thirty days; so long the formality lasted, and we may think there were some in whom the real mourning continued much longer. Yet the ending of the days of weeping and mourning for Moses is an intimation, that how great soever our losses have been, we must not abandon ourselves to perpetual grief; we must suffer the wound at least to heal up in time. If we hope to go to heaven rejoicing, why should we resolve to go to the grave mourning? The ceremonial law of Moses is dead and buried in the grave of Christ; but the Jews have not yet ended the days of their mourning for it.

9. ¶ And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and

and did as the LORD commanded Moses. 10. ¶ And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. 11. In all the signs and the wonders which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land. 12. And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel.

We have here a very honourable encomium both of Moses and Joshua; each have their praise, and should have. It is ungrateful so to magnify our living friends, as to forget the merits of those that are gone, to whose memories there is a debt of honour due: all the respects must not be paid to the rising sun; and on the other hand, it is as unjust to cry up the merit of those that are gone, as to despise the benefit we have in those that survive and succeed them: Let God be glorified in both, as here.

1. Joshua is praised as a man admirably well qualified for the work to which he was called, ver. 9. Moses brought Israel to the borders of Canaan, and then died and left them, to signify that the law made nothing perfect, Heb. vii. 19. It brings men into a wilderness of conviction, but not into the Canaan of rest and settled peace: It is an honour reserved for Joshua, (our Lord Jesus, of whom Joshua was a type) to do that for us which the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, Rom. viii. 3. Through him we enter into rest; the spiritual rest of conscience, and eternal rest in heaven. Three things concurred to clear Joshua's call to this great undertaking. 1. God fitted him for it: *He was full of the spirit of wisdom*; and so he had need, who had such a peevish people to rule and such a polite people to conquer. Conduct is as requisite in a general as courage. Herein Joshua was a type of Christ, in whom are hid the treasures of wisdom. 2. Moses by the divine appointment had ordained him to it; *He had laid his hands upon him*; so substituting him to be his successor, and praying to God to qualify him for the service to which he had called him: and this comes in as a reason why God gave him a more than ordinary Spirit of wisdom, because his designation to the government was God's own act; and those whom God employs, he will in some measure make fit for the employment; and because this was the thing that Moses had asked of God for him, when he laid his hands on him. When the bodily presence of Christ withdrew from his Church, he prayed the Father to send another Comforter, and obtained what he prayed for. 3. The people cheerfully owned him and submitted to him. Note, An interest in the affections of people is a great advantage, and a great encouragement to those that are called to public trusts of what kind soever. It was also a great mercy to the people, that when Moses was dead they were not as

sheep having no shepherd, but had one ready among them, in whom they did unanimously and might with the highest satisfaction acquiesce.

2. Moses is praised, ver. 10, 11, 12. And with good reason.

1. He was indeed a very great man upon two accounts among others, (1.) His intimacy with the God of nature; *God knew him face to face*, and so he knew God. See Numb. xii. 8. He saw more of the glory of God than any (at least) of the Old Testament saints ever did: He had more free and frequent access to God, and was spoken to, not in dreams and visions and slumberings on the bed, but when he was awake and standing before the cherubims. Other prophets, when God appeared and spoke to them, were struck with terror, Dan. x. 7. but Moses whenever he received a divine revelation kept his temper. (2.) His interest and power in the kingdom of nature; the miracles of judgment he wrought in Egypt before Pharaoh, the miracles of mercy he wrought in the wilderness before Israel, served to demonstrate that he was a particular favourite of heaven, and had an extraordinary commission to act as he did on this earth. Never was there any man whom Israel had more reason to love, nor whom the enemies of Israel had more reason to fear. Observe, the historian calls the miracles Moses wrought, signs and wonders, done with a mighty hand and great terror; which may refer to the terrors of mount Sinai, by which God fully ratified Moses's commission, and demonstrated it beyond exception to be divine, and this in the sight of all Israel.

2. He was greater than any other of the prophets of the Old Testament, though they were men of great interest in heaven and great influence upon earth, yet there were none of them to be compared with this great man; none of them either evidenced or executed a commission from heaven so as Moses did. This seems to have been written long after, yet then there had not risen any prophet like unto Moses nor did there arise any such betwixt that and the sealing up of the vision and prophecy. By Moses God gave the law and moulded and formed the Jewish Church; by the other prophets he only sent particular reproofs, directions, and predictions. The last of the prophets concludes with a charge to remember the law of Moses, Mal. iv. 4. Christ himself often appeals to the writings of Moses, and vouched him for a witness, as one that saw his day at a distance and spake of him. But as far as the other prophets came short of him our Lord Jesus went beyond him; his doctrine more excellent, his miracles more illustrious, and his communion with his Father more intimate, for he had laid in his bosom from eternity, and by him God doth now in these last days speak to us. Moses was faithful as a servant, but Christ as a son. The history of Moses leaves him buried in the plains of Moab, and concludes with the period of his government; but the history of our Saviour leaves him sitting on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and we are assured, that of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. The apostle in his epistle to the Hebrews largely proves the pre-eminence of Christ above Moses, as a good reason why we that are Christians should be obedient, faithful, and constant, to that holy religion which we make profession of. God by his grace make us all so.

THE END OF THE

FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES.

THE

THE FOLLOWING IS
AN
E X P O S I T I O N,
WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,
UPON THE
HISTORICAL BOOKS
OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT;

VIZ.

JOSHUA,
JUDGES,
RUTH,
I. SAMUEL,
II. SAMUEL,
I. KINGS,
II. KINGS,

I. CHRONICLES,
II. CHRONICLES,
EZRA,
NEHEMIAH,
AND
ESTHER.

By MATTHEW HENRY,
LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

P R E F A C E

TO THE

HISTORICAL BOOKS.

THIS methodized and practical Exposition of the Historical Books, ventures abroad with fear and trembling in the same plain and homely dress with the former, on the Pentateuch (*ornari res ipsa negat, contenta doceri.*) But I trust, through grace, on the same honest design with that, to promote the knowledge of the Scripture, in order to the reforming of men's hearts and lives. If I may but be instrumental to make my readers wise and good, wiser and better, more watchful against sin, and more careful of their duty both to God and man, and, in order to that, more in love with the word and law of God, I have all I desire, all I aim at. *He that ministereth seed to the sower multiplies the seed sown, by increasing the fruits of our righteousness,* 2 Cor. ix. 10.

It is the history of the Jewish Church and Nation, from their first settlement in the promised land, after their four hundred and thirty years bondage in Egypt, and their forty years wandering in the wilderness, to their re-settlement there after their seventy years captivity in Babylon; from Joshua to Nehemiah. The five books of Moses were taken up more with their laws, institutes, and charters, but all these books are purely historical; and in that way of writing, a great deal of very valuable learning and wisdom has been conveyed from one generation to another.

The chronology of this history, and the ascertaining of the times when the several events contained in it happened, would very much illustrate the history, and add to the brightness of it: it is therefore well worthy the search of the curious and ingenious, and they may find both pleasure and profit in perusing the labours of many learned men who have directed their studies that way. I confess I could willingly have entertained myself and reader in this preface, with a calculation of the times through which this history passeth; but I considered, that such a babe in knowledge as I am, could not pretend either to add to or correct what has been done by so many great writers, much less to decide the controversies that have been agitated among them. I had indeed some thoughts of consulting my worthy, and ever honoured friend, Mr. Talents, of Shrewsbury, the learned author of the View of Universal History, and to have begged some advice and assistance from him in methodizing the contents of this history; but that week that I put up my last hand to this part, it pleased God to put an end to his useful life, (and useful it was to the last) and to call him to his rest in the eighty-ninth year of his age; so that purpose was broken off, that thought of my heart. But that elaborate performance of his, commonly called his Chronological Tables, gives great light to this, as indeed to all other parts of history. And Dr. Lightfoot's Chronology of the Old Testament, and Mr. Cradock's History of the Old Testament methodized, may also be of great use to such readers as I write for.

As to the particular chronological difficulties which occur in the thread of this story, I have not been large upon them, because many times I could not satisfy myself, and how then could I satisfy my reader concerning them, I have not indeed met with any difficulties so great, but that solutions might be given of them, and have been sufficient to silence the atheists and antiscripturists, and to roll away from the sacred records all the reproach of contradiction and inconsistency with themselves, for to do that, it is enough to shew that the difference may be accommodated either this way or that, when at the same time one cannot satisfy one's self which way is the right.

But it is well these are things about which we may very safely and very comfortably be ignorant and unresolved: What concerns our salvation is plain enough, and we need not perplex ourselves about the niceties of Chronology, Genealogy, or Chorography. At least, my undertaking leads me not into those labyrinths: What is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, is what I intend to observe; and would endeavour to open what is dark and hard to be understood, only in order to that. Every author must be taken in his way of writing; the sacred penmen, as they have not left us formal systems, so they have not left us formal annals, but useful narratives of things proper for our direction in the way of duty, which some great judges of common writers have thought to be the most pleasant and profitable histories, and most likely to answer the end. The word of God, *manifestis pascit, obscuris exercet*, (Aug. in Joh. Tract. 45.) as one of the ancients expresseth it, hath enough in it that is easy to nourish the meanest to life eternal, yet enough that is difficult to try the industry and humility of the greatest.

There are several things which should recommend this part of Sacred Writ to our diligent and constant search.

1. That it is history; and therefore entertaining and very pleasant, edifying and very serviceable to the conduct of human life. It gratifies the inquisitive with the knowledge of that which the most intense speculation could not discover any other way. By a retirement into ourselves, and a serious contemplation of the objects we are surrounded with, close reasoning may advance many excellent truths without being beholden to any other. But for the knowledge of past events, we are entirely indebted (and must be so) to the reports and records of others. A notion or hypothesis of a man's own framing may gain him the reputation of a wit, but a history of a man's own framing, will lay him under the reproach of a cheat, any farther than of that which he himself is an eye or ear-witness of. How much are we indebted then to the divine wisdom and goodness for these writings, which have made things so long since past as familiar to us as any of the occurrences of the age and place we live in?

History is so edifying that parables and apologies have been invented to make up the deficiencies of it, for our instruction concerning good and evil; and whatever may be said of other history, we are sure in this history there is no matter of fact recorded, but what has its use, and will help either to expound God's providence or guide man's prudence.

2. That it is true history, and what we may rely upon the credit of, and need not fear being deceived in. That which the heathens reckoned *tempus ædæon*, which they knew nothing at all of, and *tempus ædæon*, the account of which was wholly fabulous, is to us *tempus ædæon*, which we have a most authentic account of. The Greeks were with them the most celebrated historians, and yet their successors in learning and dominion, the Romans, put them into no good name for their credibility, witness that of the poet: *Et quicquid Græcia mendax audet in Historia*, Juv. Sat. x. But the history we have before us is of undoubted certainty, and no cunningly-devised fable. To be well assured of this is a great satisfaction, especially since we meet with so many things in it truly miraculous, and many more great and marvellous.

3. That it is ancient history, far more ancient than was ever pretended to come from any other hand. Homer, the most ancient genuine heathen writer, now entirely extant, is reckoned to live at the beginning of the Olympiads, near the time when it is computed the city of Rome was founded by Romulus, which was but about the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah. And his writings pretend not to be historical, but poetical fiction all over, rhapsodies indeed they are, and the very Alcoran of Paganism.

The most ancient authentic historians now extant are Herodotus and Thucydides, who were contemporaries with the latest of our historians, Ezra and Nehemiah, and could not write with any certainty of events much before their own time. The obscurity, deficiency, and uncertainty of all ancient history, but that which we find in the Scripture, is abundantly made out by the learned Bishop Stillingfleet, in that most useful Book, his *Origines Sacre*, Lib. 1. Let the antiquity of this history not only recommend it to the curious, but recommend to us all that way of religion it directs us in, as the good old way, in which if we walk, we shall find rest to our souls, Jer. vi. 16.

4. That it is Church-history, the history of the Jewish Church, that sacred society, incorporated for religion, and the custody of the oracles and ordinances of God, by a charter under the broad-seal of heaven, a covenant confirmed by miracles. Many great and mighty nations there were at this time in the world, celebrated, it is likely, for wisdom and learning, and valour, illustrious men, and illustrious actions, yet the records of them are all lost, either in silence or fables, while that little inconsiderable people of the Jews, that dwell alone, and was not reckoned among the Nations, Numb. xxiii. 9. makes so great a figure in the best known, most ancient, and most lasting of all histories: and no notice taken in it, of the affairs of other nations, but only as they fell in with the affairs of the Jews; *for the Lord's portion is his people. Jacob is the lot of his inheritance*, Deut. xxxii. 8, 9. Such a concern has God for his Church in every age, and so dear have its interests been to him; let them therefore be so to us, that we may be followers of him as dear children.

PREFACE TO THE HISTORICAL BOOKS.

5. That it is a divine history, given by inspiration of God, and a part of that blessed book which is to be the standing rule of our faith and practice. And we are not to think it a part of it, which might have been spared, or which we may now pass over, or cast a careless eye upon, as if it were indifferent whether we read it or no, but to read it as a sacred record preserved for our benefit, *on whom the ends of the world are come.*

1. This history is of great use for the understanding of some other parts of the Old Testament. The account we have here of David's life and reign, and especially of his troubles, is a key to many of his Psalms: And much light is given to most of the prophecies by these histories.

2. Though we have not altogether so many types of Christ here, as we had in the history and law of Moses, yet even here we meet with divers who were figures of him that was to come, such as Joshua, Samson, Solomon, Cyrus, but especially David, whose kingdom was typical of the kingdom of the Messiah, and the covenant of royalty made with him, a dark representation of the covenant of redemption made with the Eternal Word; nor know we how to call Christ the son of David, unless we be acquainted with this history; nor how to *receive it*, that John Baptist was the *Elias that was to come*, Mat. xi. 14.

3. The state of the Jewish Church which is here set before us, was typical of the Gospel Church, and the state of that in the days of the Messiah; and as the prophecies which related to it looked farther to the latter days, so did the histories of it; and still *these things happened to them for ensamples*, 1 Cor. x. 11. By the tenor of this history we are given to understand these three things concerning the Church; for *the thing that hath been, is that which shall be*, Eccl. i. 9. (1.) That we are not to expect the perfect purity and unity of the Church in this world, and therefore not to be stumbled, though we are grieved at its corruptions, distempers and divisions, not to think strange concerning them, as though some strange thing happened, much less to think worse of its laws and constitutions for the sake of them, or despair of its perpetuity. What wretched stains of idolatry, impiety, and immorality appear on the Jewish Church; and what a woeful breach was there between Judah and Ephraim, yet God took them (as I may say) with all their faults, and never wholly rejected them, till they rejected the Messiah. *Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of her God, though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel*, Jer. li. 5. (2.) That we are not to expect the constant tranquillity and prosperity of the Church: It was then often oppressed and afflicted from its youth, had its years of servitude, as well as its days of triumph, was often obscured, diminished, impoverished, and brought low, and yet still God secured to himself a remnant, *a holy seed*, which was *the substance thereof*, Isa. vi. 13. Let us not then be surprized to see the Gospel Church sometimes under latches and driven into the wilderness, and the gates of hell prevailing far against it. (3.) That yet we need not fear the utter extirpation of it. The Gospel Church is called, the *Israel of God*, Gal. vi. 16. and the *Jerusalem which is above*, Gal. iv. 26. the *heavenly Jerusalem*, for as *Israel after the flesh*, and the *Jerusalem that then was*, by the wonderful care of the divine providence, rid out all the storms with which they were tossed and threatened, and continued in being, till they were made to resign all their honours to the Gospel Church, which they were the figures of; so shall that also, notwithstanding all its shocks, be preserved, till the mystery of God shall be finished, and the kingdom of Grace shall have its perfection in the kingdom of glory.

4. This history is of great use to us for our direction in the way of our duty; it was written for our learning, that we may see the evil we should avoid and be armed against it; and the good we should do and be quickened to it. Though they are generally judges, and kings, and great men, whose lives are here written, yet in them, even those of the meanest rank may see the deformity of sin, and hate it; and the beauty of holiness, and be in love with it; nay the greater the person is, the more evident are both these: for if the great be good, it is their goodness that makes their greatness honourable; if bad, their greatness doth but make their badness the more shameful. The failings even of good people are also recorded here for our admonition, that he that thinks he stands may take heed lest he fall; and he that has fallen may not despair of forgiveness, if he recover himself by repentance.

5. This history, as it shews what God requires of us, so it shews what we may expect from his providence, especially concerning states and kingdoms. By the dealings of God with the Jewish nation, it appears, that as nations are, so they must expect to fare; that while princes and people serve the interests of God's kingdom among men, he will secure and advance their interests; but when they shake off his government, and rebel against him, they can look for no other but an inundation of judgments: It was so all along with Israel, while they kept close to God they prospered, when they forsook him every thing went cross. That great man Archbishop Tillotson (*Vol. I. Sermon 3. on Prov. xiv. 34.*) suggests, That though as to particular persons, the providences of God are promiscuously administered in this world, because there is another world of rewards and punishments for them, yet it is not so with nations as such, but national virtues are ordinarily rewarded with temporal blessings and national sins punished with temporal judgments; because, as he saith, public bodies and communities of men as such, can only be rewarded and punished in this world, for in the next they will all be dissolved. So plainly are God's ways of disposing kingdoms laid before us in the glass of this history, that I could wish Christian statesmen would think themselves as much concerned as preachers to acquaint themselves with it; they might fetch as good maxims of state and rules of policy from this as from the best of the Greek and Roman historians. We are blessed (as they were) with a divine relation, and make a national profession of religion and relation to God, and therefore are to look upon ourselves as in a peculiar manner under a divine regimen, so that the things which happened to them were designed for ensamples to us.

I cannot pretend to write for great ones. But if what is here done may be delightful to any in reading, and helpful in understanding and improving this sacred history, and governing themselves by the dictates of it, let God have all the glory, and let all the rivers return to the ocean from whence they came. When I look back on what is done, I see nothing to boast of, but a great deal to be ashamed of; and when I look forward on what is to be done, I see nothing in myself to trust to for the doing of it: no sufficiency of my own, but *by the grace of God, I am what I am*, and that grace shall, I trust, be sufficient for me. *Surely in the Lord I have righteousness and strength*. That blessed *ἐπιχορηγία* which the apostle speaks of, *Phil. i. 19.* or that continual supply or communication of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, is what we may in faith pray for and depend upon to furnish us for every good word and work.

The pleasantness of the study has drawn me on the writing of this, and the candour with which my friends have been pleased to receive my poor endeavours on the Pentateuch, encourageth me to publish it; it is done according to the best of my skill, not without some care and application of mind, in the same method and manner with that; I wish I could have done it in less compass, that it might have been more within reach of *the poor of the flock*. But then it would not have been so plain and full as I desire it may be for the benefit of the *lamb of the flock*; *Brevis esse laboro, Obscurus fio*.

With an humble submission to the divine providence and the disposals of that, and an humble reliance on the divine grace and the conduct and operation of that, I purpose still to proceed, as I have time in this work. Two volumes more will, if God permit, conclude the Old Testament; and then, if my friends encourage me, and my God spare me, and enable me for it, I intend to go on to the New Testament. For though *many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those parts of scripture which are yet before us* (*Luke i. 1.*) whose works *praise them in the gates*, and are likely to outlive mine, yet while the subject is really so copious as it is, and the manner of handling it may possibly be so various, and while one book comes into the hands of some, and another into the hands of others, and all concur in the same design to advance the common interests of Christ's kingdom, the *common faith* once delivered to the saints, and the *common salvation* of precious souls; (*Tit. i. 4. Jude 3.*) I hope store of this kind will be thought no fore. I make bold to mention my purpose to proceed thus publickly, in hopes I may have the advice of my friends in it, and their prayers for me, that I may be made more *ready and mighty in the scriptures*, that understanding and utterance may be given to me, and that I may obtain mercy of the Lord Jesus, to be found his faithful servant, who am less than the least of all that call him master.

AN E X P O S I T I O N, WITH P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S, Upon the BOOK of J O S H U A.

We have now before us, 1. The history of the Jewish nation, in this book, and those that follow it to the end of the book of Esther. These books, to the end of the book of the Kings, the Jewish writers call *the first book of the prophets*, to bring them within the distribution of the books of the *Old Testament*, into the law, the prophets, and the Cherubim, or Hagiographa, *Luke xxiv. 44.* The rest they make part of the Hagiographa. For though history be their subject, it is justly supposed prophets were their penmen; to these books that are purely and properly *prophetical* the name of the prophet is prefixed, because the credibility of the prophecies depended much upon the character of the prophets; but these historical books, it is probable, were collections of the authentic records of the nation, which some prophets or other, (and such the Jewish Church was for many ages more or less continually blessed with) were divinely directed and helped to put together for the service of the Church to the end of the world; as their other officers, so their Historiographers had their authority from Heaven.—It should seem that though the substance of the several histories were written when the events were fresh in memory, and written under a divine direction, yet that long after they were put into the form wherein we now have them, by some other hand, under divine direction likewise; probably all by the same hand or about the same time. The grounds of the conjecture are, (1.) Because former writings are so often referred to, as the book of Jasher, *Josh. x. 13.* and *2 Sam. i. 18.* and the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Judah often; and the books of Gad, Nathan, and Iddo. (2.) Because the days when the things were done are spoken of sometimes as days long since passed; as *1 Sam. ix. 9. He that is now called a prophet was then called a seer.* And (3.) Because we often read of things remaining *unto this day*, as stones, *Josh. iv. 9. —vii. 26.—viii. 29.—x. 27. 1 Sam. vi. 18.* Names of places, *Josh. v. 9.—vii. 26. Judg. i. 36.—xv. 19.—xviii. 12. 2 Kings xiv. 7.* Rights and possessions, *Judg. i. 21. 1 Sam. xxvii. 6.* Customs and usages, *1 Sam. v. 5. 2 Kings xvii. 41.* Which clauses since have been added to the history by the inspired collectors, for the confirmation and illustration of it to those of their own age: And if any one may offer a meer conjecture, it is not unlikely that the historical books to the end of the Kings were put together by Jeremiah the prophet a little before the captivity, for it is said of Ziglag, *1 Sam. xxvii. 6.* it remains to the *kings of Judah* (which style began after Solomon and ended in the captivity) *unto this day*: And that those after were put together by Ezra the scribe, some time after the captivity. However, though we are in the dark concerning their authors, we are in no doubt concerning their authority, they were a part of the oracles of God, which were committed to the Jews, and were so received and referred to by our Saviour and the apostles.—In the five books of Moses we had a very full account of the rise, advance, and constitution of the Old Testament Church, the family out of which it was raised, the promise, that great charter by which it was incorporated, the miracles by which it was built up, and the laws and ordinances by which it was to be governed. From which one would conceive an expectation of its character and state very different from what we find in this history: A nation that had statutes and judgments so righteous one would think should have been very holy, and that had promises so rich should have been very happy. But alas, a great part of the history is a melancholy representation of their sins and miseries, for *the law made nothing perfect*; that was to be done by the *bringing in of the better hope*: And yet if we compare the history of the Christian Church with its constitution, we shall find the same cause for wonder, so many have been its errors and corruptions, for neither doth the *Gospel make any thing perfect* in this world, but leaves us still in expectation of a *better hope* in the future state.

2. We have next before us the *book of Joshua*, so called perhaps not because it was written by him, for that is uncertain*. However that be, it is written concerning him, and if any other wrote it, it was collected out of his journals, or memoirs. It contains the history of Israel under the command and government of Joshua, how he presided as general of their armies, (1.) In their entrance into Canaan, *chap. i.—v.* (2.) In their conquest of Canaan, *chap. vi.—xii.* (3.) In the distribution of the land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel, *chap. xiii.—xxi.* (4.) In the settlement and establishment of religion among them, *chap. xxii.—xxiv.* In all which he was a great example of wisdom, courage, fidelity, and piety, to all that are in places of public trust. But that is not all the use that is to be made of this history, we may see in it, 1. *Much of God, and his providence*, his power in the kingdom of nature, his justice in punishing the Canaanites when the *measure of their iniquity was full*; his faithfulness to his covenant with the patriarchs; his kindness to his people Israel, notwithstanding their provocations. See him as the Lord of Hosts *determining the issues of war*, and as the director of the lot, *determining the bounds of men's habitations.* 2. *Much of Christ and his grace.* Though Joshua is not expressly mentioned in the New Testament as a type of Christ, yet all agree he was a very eminent one. He bore our Saviour's name, as did also another type of him, Joshua the High Priest, *Zech. vi. 11, 12.* The LXX giving the name of Joshua a Greek termination, call him all along *Ἰησοῦς, Jesus*, and so he is called, *Acts vii. 45.* and *Heb. iv. 8.* Justin Martyr, one of the first writers of the Christian Church, (*Dialog. cum Tryph. p. mihi. 300.*) makes that promise, *Exod. xxiii. 20. Mine angel shall bring thee into the place I have prepared*, to point at Joshua, and these words, *My name is in him*, to refer to this, that his name should be the same with that of the Messiah; it signifies, *He shall save.* Joshua saves God's people from the Canaanites, our Lord Jesus saves them from their sins. Christ, as Joshua, is the *captain of our salvation*, a *leader and commander of the people*, to tread Satan under their feet, and to put them in possession of the heavenly Canaan, and to give them rest, which (it is said, *Heb. iv. 8.*) Joshua did not.

C H A P. I.

The book begins with the history, not of Joshua's life, many remarkable passages of that we had before in the book of Moses, but of his reign and government. In this chapter, (1.) God appoints him to the government in the stead of Moses, gives him an ample commission, full instructions, and great encouragements, ver. 1—9. (2.) He accepts the government, and addresses himself immediately to the business of it, giving orders to the officers of the people in general, ver. 10, 11. And particularly to the two tribes and a half, ver. 12—15. (3.) The people agree to it, and take an oath of fealty to him, ver. 16—18. And a reign which thus began with God, could not but be honourable to the prince, and comfortable to the subject. The last words of Moses are still verified, Happy art thou; O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people? Deut. xxxiii. 29.

1. **N**OW after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, 2. Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. 3. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. 4. From the wilderness, and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the

land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea, toward the going down of the sun shall be your coast 5. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. 6. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land which I swore unto their fathers to give them. 7. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. 8. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. 9. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage, be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest.

Honour is here put upon Joshua and great power lodged in his hand, by him that is the fountain of honour and power, and by whom kings reign; instructions given him by infinite wisdom, and encouragements by the God

* Dr. Lightfoot thinks Phineas wrote it. Bishop Patrick is clear that Joshua wrote it himself.

God of all consolation. God had before spoken to Moses concerning him, *Numb. xxvii. 18.* But now he speaks to him, *ver. 1.* probably as he spake to Moses, *Lev. i. 11* out of the tabernacle of the congregation, where Joshua had with Moses presented himself, *Deut. xxxi. 14.* to learn the way of attending there. Though Eleazer had the breast-plate of judgment, which Joshua was directed to consult as there was occasion, *Numb. xxvii. 21.* yet for his greater encouragement God here speaks to him immediately, some think, in a dream or vision, (as *Job xxxiii. 15.*) for though God has tied us to instituted ordinances in them to attend him, yet he hath not tied himself to them, but that he may otherwise make himself known to his people, and speak to their hearts otherwise than by their ears.

Concerning Joshua's call to the government, observe here,

1. The time when it was given him, *After the death of Moses.* As soon as ever Moses was dead Joshua took upon him the administration, by virtue of his solemn ordinances in Moses's life-time; an interregnum, though but for a few days, might have been of ill consequence; but, it is probable, God spoke to him to go forward towards Canaan, not till after the thirty days of mourning for Moses were ended; not, as the Jews say, because the sadness of his spirit during those days dis-fitted him for communion with God, he sorrowed not as one that had no hope; but by this solemn pause, and a month's adjournment of the public councils, even now when time was so very precious to them, God would put an honour upon the memory of Moses, and give time to the people not only to lament their loss of him, but to repent of their miscarriages towards him during the forty years of his government.

2. The place Joshua had been in before he was thus preferred. He was Moses's minister, i. e. an immediate attendant upon his person and assistant in business. The LXX translate it *εργαζομενος*, a workman under Moses, under his direction and command. Observe, 1. He that was here called to honour had been long bred to business. Our Lord Jesus himself took upon him the form of a servant, and then God highly exalted him. 2. He was trained up in subjection, and under command. Those are fittest to rule that have learnt to obey. 3. He that was to succeed Moses was intimately acquainted with him, that he might *fully know his doctrine and manner of life, his purpose and long-suffering.* (*2 Tim. iii. 10.*) might take the same measures, walk in the same spirit, in the same steps, being to carry on the same work. 4. He was herein a type of Christ, who might therefore be called Moses's minister, because he was made under the law, and fulfilled all the righteousness of it.

3. The call itself that God gave him, which is very full.

1. The consideration upon which he was called to the government, *Moses my servant is dead,* *ver. 2.* All good men are God's servants; and it is no disparagement, but an honour to the greatest of men to be so; angels themselves are his ministers. Moses was called to extraordinary work, was a steward in God's house, and in the discharge of the trusts reposed in him he served not himself but God that employed him; he was faithful as a servant, and with an eye to the Son, as is intimated, *Heb. iii. 5.* where what he did is said to be for a testimony of the things that should be spoken after; God will own his servants, will confess them in the great day. But Moses, though God's servant, and one that could ill be spared, is dead; for God will change hands, to shew that whatever instruments he useth he is not tied to any. Moses when he has done his work as a servant, dies and goes to rest from his labours, and enters into the joy of his Lord. Observe, God takes notice of the death of his servants. *It is precious in his sight,* *Psal. cxvi. 15.*

2. The call itself: *Now therefore arise.* (1.) Though Moses is dead the work must go on, therefore arise and go about it. Let not weeping hinder sowing, nor the withering of the most useful hands be the weakening of ours; for when God has work to do he will either find or make instruments fit to carry it on. Moses the servant is dead, but God the master is not, he lives for ever. (2.) Because Moses is dead, therefore the work devolves upon thee as his successor, for hereunto thou was appointed. Therefore there is need of thee to fill up his place, Up and be doing. Note, (1.) The removal of useful men should quicken the survivors to be so much the more diligent in doing good. Such and such are dead, and we must die shortly, therefore let us work while it is day. (2.) It is a great mercy to a people, if when useful men are taken away in the midst of their usefulness, others are raised up in their stead to go on where they broke off. Joshua must arise to finish what Moses began, thus the latter generations enter into the labours of the former. And thus Christ, our Joshua, doth that for us which could never be done by the law of Moses, justifies, *Acts xiii. 39.* and sanctifies, *Rom. viii. 3.* The life of Moses made way for Joshua, and prepared the people for what was to be done by him. Thus the law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ: and then the death of Moses made room for Joshua; thus we are dead to the law our first husband, that we may be married to Christ, *Rom. vii. 4.*

3. The particular service he was now called out to. Arise, go over this Jordan, this river you have in view, and on the banks of which you lie encamped. This was a trial to the faith of Joshua, whether he would give orders and make preparation for passing the river, when there was no visible way of getting over it, at least not at this place and at this time, when *all the banks were overflowed,* *chap. iii. 15.* He had no pontoons or bridge of boats by which to convey them over, and yet he must believe if God ordered them over he will open a way for them. Going over Jordan was going into Canaan, thither Moses might not, could not, bring them, *Deut. xxxi. 2.* Thus the honour of bringing the many sons to glory is reserved for Christ the captain of our salvation, *Heb. ii. 10.*

4. The grant of the land of Canaan to the children of Israel is here repeated, *ver. 2, 3, 4.* *I do give it them.* To the patriarchs it was promised, *I will give it,* but now the fourth generation was expired, the iniquity of the Amorites was full, and the time was come for the performance of the promise; it is actually conveyed, and they are put in possession of that which they had long been put in expectation of, *I do give it, enter upon it, it is all your own,* *say, ver. 3.* *I have given it;* though it be yet unconquered, it is as sure to you as if it were in your hands. Observe, (1.) The persons to whom the conveyance is made, to them, even to the children of Israel, *ver. 2.* because they are the seed of Jacob, who was called Israel then when this promise was made to him, *Gen. xxxv. 10-12.* The children of Israel though they had been very provoking in the wilderness, yet for their father's sakes should have the entail preserved. And it was the children of the murmurers, that God said should enter Canaan, *Numb. xiv. 31.* (2.) The land itself is conveyed from the river Euphrates eastward to the Mediterranean sea westward, *ver. 4.* Though their sin cut them short of this large possession, and they never replenished all the country within the bounds here mentioned; yet had they been obedient, God would have given them this and much more. Out of all these countries, and many others, there were in process of time proselytes to the Jewish religion, as appear, *Acts ii. 5, &c.* If their Church was enlarged, though their nation was not multiplied, it cannot be said that the promise was of none effect. And if this promise had not its full accomplishment in the letter, believers might thence infer that it had a farther meaning, and was to be fulfilled in the kingdom of the Messiah, both that of grace and that of glory. (3.) The condition is here implied upon which this grant is made,

in those words, *I said unto Moses, i. e. upon the terms that Moses told you of many a time, if ye will keep my statutes, you shall go in and possess that good land.* Take it under those provisos and limitations and not otherwise. The precept and promise must not be separated. (4.) It is intimated with what ease they should gain the possession of this land, it it were not their own fault, in these words, *every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon (within the following bounds) shall be your own.* Do but set your foot upon it and you have it.

5. The promises God here makes to Joshua for his encouragement. 1.

That he should be sure of the presence of God with him in this great work to which he was called; *ver. 5.* *As I was with Moses* to direct and strengthen him, to own and prosper him, and give him success in bringing Israel out of Egypt and leading them through the wilderness, so I will be with thee to enable thee to settle them in Canaan. Joshua was sensible how far he came short of Moses in wisdom and grace, but what Moses did was done by virtue of the presence of God with him, and if Joshua, though he had not always the same presence of mind that Moses had, yet if he had always the same presence of God, he would do well enough. Note, It is a great comfort to the rising generation of ministers and christians, that the same grace which was sufficient for those that went before them, shall not be wanting to them, if they be not wanting to themselves in the improvement of it. It is repeated here again, *ver. 9.* *The Lord thy God is with thee* as a God of power, and that power engaged for thee whithersoever thou goest. Note, Those that go where God sends them shall have him with them wherever they go, and they need desire no more to make them easy and prosperous. 2. That the presence of God should never be withdrawn from him, *I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee,* *ver. 5.* Moses had assured him of this, *Deut. xxxi. 8.* that though he must now leave him, God never would, and here God himself confirms that word of his servant Moses, (*Isa. xlv. 26.*) and engageth never to leave Joshua. We need the presence of God not only when we are beginning our work to set us in, but in the progress of it to further us with a continual help. If that at any time fail us, we are gone; but this we may be sure of, that the Lord is with us while we are with him. This promise here made to Joshua is applied to all believers, and improved as an argument against covetousness. *Heb. xiii. 5.* *Be content with such things as ye have,* for he hath said, *I will never leave thee.* 3. That he should have victory over all the enemies of Israel, *ver. 5.* *There shall not any man, that stands against thee, be able to stand before thee.* Note, There is no standing before those that have God on their side, *If he be for us, who can be against us?* God promitteth him clear success, the enemy should not make any head against him; and constant success all the days of his life: however it might be with Israel when he was gone, all his reign should be graced with triumphs. What Joshua had himself encouraged the people with long ago, *Numb. xiv. 9.* God here encourageth him with. 4. That he should himself have the dividing of this land among the people of Israel, *ver. 6.* It was a great encouragement to him in beginning this work, that he was sure to see it finished, and his labour should not be in vain. Some make it a reason why he should arm himself with resolution, and be of good courage, because of the ill character this people was under, whom he must cause to inherit that land; he knew well enough what a froward discontented people they were, and how unmanageable they had been in his predecessor's time, let him therefore expect vexation from them and be of good courage.

6. The charge and command he gives to Joshua, which is,

1. That he conform himself in every thing to the law of God, and make that his rule, *ver. 7, 8.* God doth as it were put the book of the law into Joshua's hands, as when Jash was crowned they gave him the testimony, *2 Kings xi. 12.* And concerning this book, he is charged, (1.) *To meditate therein day and night,* that he might understand it and have it ready to him upon all occasions. If ever any man's business might have excused him from meditation and other acts of devotion, one would think Joshua's might at this time; it was a great trust that was lodged in his hands, the care of it was enough to kill him if he had ten souls, and yet he must find time and thoughts for meditations. Whatever affairs of this world we have to mind, we must not neglect the one thing needful. (2.) Not to let it depart out of his mouth, i. e. All his orders to the people, and his judgments upon appeals made to him, must be consonant to the law of God; upon all occasions he must speak according to this rule; *Isa. viii. 20.* Joshua was to maintain and carry on the work that Moses had begun, and therefore he must not only complete the salvation Moses had wrought for them, but must uphold that holy religion he had established among them. There was no occasion to make new laws, but that good thing which was committed to him he must carefully and faithfully keep, *2 Tim. i. 14.* (3.) He must observe to do according to all this law. To this end he must meditate therein, not for contemplation sake only, or to fill his head with notions, or that he might find something to puzzle the priests with, but that he might both as a man and as a magistrate observe to do according to what was written therein; and several things were written there which had particular reference to the business he had now before him, as the laws concerning their wars, the destroying of the Canaanites, and the dividing of Canaan, &c. these he must religiously observe. Joshua was a man of great power and authority, yet he must himself be under command and do as he is bidden. No man's dignity or dominion, how great soever, sets him above the law of God. Joshua must not only govern by law, and take care that the people observed the law, but he must observe it himself, and to by his own example maintain the honour and power of it. (1.) He must do what was written; it is not enough to hear and read the word, to commend and admire it, to know and remember it, to talk and discourse of it, but we must do it. (2.) He must do according to all that was written, exactly observing the law as his copy, and doing not only that which was there required, but in all circumstances according to the appointment. (3.) He must do according to all that was written, without exception or reserve, having a respect to all God's commandments, even those which are most displeasing to flesh and blood. (4.) He must observe to do so, observe the checks of conscience, the hints of providence, and all the advantages of opportunity: careful observance is necessary to universal obedience. (5.) He must not turn from it, either in his own practice, or in any act of government, to the right hand or to the left, for there are errors on both hands, and virtue is in the mean. (6.) He must be strong and courageous, that he may do according to the law. So many discouragements there are in the way of duty, that those who will proceed and persevere in it, must put on resolution. And (lastly) to encourage him in his obedience, he assures him, that then he shall do wisely (as it is in the margin) and make his way prosperous, *ver. 7, 8.* They that make the word of God their rule, and conscientiously walk by that rule, shall both do well and speed well; it will furnish them with the best maxims, by which to order their conversation, *Psal. cxi. 10.* And it will entitle them to the blessings; God shall give them the desire of their heart.

2. That he encourage himself herein with the promise and presence of God, and make those his stay, *ver. 6.* *Be strong and of good courage.* And again, *ver. 7.* As if this was the one thing needful, *only be strong and very courageous.* And he concludes with this, *ver. 9.* *Be strong and of a good courage, be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed.* Joshua had long since signalized his

his valour, in the war with Amalek, and in his dissent from the report of the evil spies, and yet God sees fit thus to inculcate the precept upon him. Those that have grace have need to be called upon again and again to exercise grace and to improve in it. Joshua was humble and low in his own eyes, not distrustful of God and his power, and promise, but diffident of himself, and of his own wisdom, and strength, and sufficiency for the work, especially coming after so great a man as Moses, and therefore God repeats this so often, *be strong and of a good courage*; let not the sense of thine own infirmities dishearten thee, God is all-sufficient. *Have not I commanded thee?* (1.) I have commanded the work to be done, and therefore it shall be done; how invincible soever the difficulties may seem that lie in the way. Nay, (2.) I have commanded, called, and commissioned thee to do it, and therefore will be sure to own thee and strengthen thee, and bear thee out in it. Note, When we are in the way of our duty, we have reason to be strong and very courageous; and it will help very much to animate and embolden us to keep our eye upon the divine warrant, and to hear God saying, *Have not I commanded thee?* I will therefore help thee, succeed thee, accept thee, reward thee. Our Lord Jesus, as Joshua here, was borne up under his sufferings by a regard to the will of God, and the commandment he received from his father, John x. 18.

10. ¶ Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, 11. Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare your victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it. 12. ¶ And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, spake Joshua, saying, 13. Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, The LORD your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land: 14. Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle, shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side Jordan: but ye shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valour, and help them: 15. Until the LORD have given your brethren rest, as he hath given you, and they also have possessed the land which the LORD your God giveth them: then ye shall return unto the land of your possession, and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD's servant gave you on this side Jordan toward the sun-rising.

Joshua being settled in the government, he presently applies himself to business; not to take state or to take his pleasures, but to further the work of God among the people over which God had set him. As he that desires the office of a minister, (1 Tim. iii. 1.) so he that desires the office of a magistrate, desires a work, a good work; neither are preferred to be idle.

1. He issues out orders to the people to provide for a march, and they had been so long encamped in their present post, that it would be a work of some difficulty to decamp. The officers of the people that commanded under Joshua in their respective tribes and families attended him for orders, which they were to transmit to the people. Inferior magistrates are as necessary and as serviceable to the public good in their places, as the supreme magistrate in his. What could Joshua have done without officers? we are therefore required to be subject not only to the king as supreme, but to governors, as to them that are sent by him, 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. By these officers (1.) Joshua gives public notice, that they were now shortly to pass over Jordan within three days. These orders I suppose were not given till after the return of the spies that were sent to bring an account of Jericho, though the story of that affair follows, chap. ii. And perhaps that was such an instance of his jealousy and over-much caution, as made it necessary he should be so often bidden as he was to be strong and of a good courage. Observe, with what assurance Joshua saith it to the people, because God had said to him, *Ye shall pass over Jordan, and shall possess the land*. We greatly honour the truth of God, when we stagger not at the promise of God. (2.) He gives them direction to prepare victuals, not to prepare transport vessels, he that bore them out of Egypt upon eagles wings, would in like manner bear them into Canaan, to bring them to himself, Exod. xix. 4. But those that were minded to have other victuals besides the manna, which was not yet ceased, must prepare it, and have it ready against the time appointed. Perhaps, though the manna did not quite cease till they were come into Canaan, chap. v. 12, yet since they were come into a land inhabited, (Exod. xvi. 35.) where they might be furnished in part with other provisions, it did not fall so plentifully, nor did they gather so much as when they had it first given them in the wilderness, but decreased gradually, and therefore they are ordered to provide other victuals, in which perhaps was included all other things necessary to their march. And some of the Jewish writers, considering that having manna they needed not to provide other victuals, understand it figuratively, that they must repent of their sins; and make their peace with God, and resolve to live a new life, that they might be ready to receive this great favour. See Exod. xix. 10, 11.

2. He minds the two tribes and a half of the obligation they were under to go over Jordan with their brethren, though they left their possessions and families on this side. Interest would make the other tribes glad to go over Jordan, but in these it was an act of self-denial and against the grain; therefore it was needful to produce the agreement which Moses had made with them, when he gave them their possession before their brethren, ver. 13. *Remember the word which Moses commanded you*. Some of them perhaps were ready to think now Moses was dead, who they thought was too hard upon them in this matter, they might find some excuse or other to discharge themselves from this engagement, or might prevail with Joshua to dispense with them; but he holds them to it, and lets them know, though Moses was dead, his commands and their promises were still in full force. He minds them, (1.) Of the advantages they had received in being first settled; *The Lord your God hath given you rest, given your minds rest, you know what you have to trust to, and are not as the rest of the tribes, waiting the issue of the war first and then of the lot*. He has also given your families rest, your wives and children, whose settlement is your satisfaction. He hath given you rest by giving you this land, this good land, which you are in full and quite possession of. Note, When God by his providence hath given us rest we ought to consider how we may honour him with the advantages of it, and what service we may do to our brethren who are unsettled, or not so well settled as we are. When God had given David rest, (2 Sam. vii. 1.) see how restless he was till he had found out a habitation for the ark, Psal. No. XXXII.

cxviii. 4, 5. When God has given us rest, we must take heed of slothfulness and of settling upon our lees. (2.) He minds them of their agreement to help their brethren in the wars of Canaan, till God had in like manner given them rest, ver. 14, 15. This was, (1.) Reasonable in itself: so closely were all the tribes incorporated, that they must needs look upon themselves as members one of another. (2.) It was enjoined them by Moses the servant of the Lord; he commanded them to do this, and Joshua his successor would see his commands observed. (3.) It was the only expedient they had to save themselves from the guilt of a great sin in settling on that side Jordan, a sin which would one time or other find them out, Numb. xxxii. 22. (4.) It was the condition of the grant Moses had made them of the land they were possessed of, so that they could not be sure of a good title to, or a comfortable enjoyment of, the land of their possession, as it is here called, ver. 15, if they did not fulfil the condition. (5.) They themselves had covenanted and agreed thereunto, Numb. xxxii. 25. *Thy servants will do as my Lord commandeth*. Thus we all lie under manifold obligations to strengthen the hands one of another, and not to seek our own welfare only, but one another's.

16. ¶ And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us, we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go. 17. According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the LORD thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses. 18. Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words, in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death; only be strong and of a good courage.

This answer was given not by the two tribes and a half only, though they are spoken of immediately before, but by the officers of all the people, (ver. 10.) as their representatives, concurring with the divine appointment, by which Joshua was set over them, and they did it heartily, and with a great deal of cheerfulness and resolution.

1. They promise him obedience, ver. 16, not only as subjects to their prince, but as soldiers to their general, of whose particular order they are to be observant: he that hath soldiers under him, saith to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another come and he comes, Matth. viii. 9. Thus the people of Israel here engage themselves to Joshua, all that thou commandest us we will readily do, without murmuring or disputing, and whithersoever thou sendest us, though upon the most difficult and perilous expedition, we will go. We must thus swear allegiance to our Lord Jesus, as the captain of our salvation, and bind ourselves to do what he commands us by his word, and to go where he sends us by his providence.

And since Joshua, being humbly conscious to himself how far short he came of Moses, feared he should not have such an influence upon the people, and such an interest in them as Moses had, they here promise that they would be as obedient to him as ever they had been to Moses, ver. 17. To speak truth, they had no reason to boast of their obedience to Moses, he had found them a stiff-necked people, Deut. ix. 24. But they mean that they would be as observant of Joshua as they should have been, and as some of them were (the generality of them at least sometimes) of Moses. Note, We must not so magnify them that are gone, how eminent soever they were, either in the magistracy or in the ministry, as to be wanting in the honour and duty we owe to those that survive and succeed them, though in gifts they may come short of them. Obedience for conscience sake will continue, though providence change the hands by which it rules and acts.

2. They pray for the presence of God with him, ver. 17. *Only the Lord thy God be with thee*, to bless and prosper thee and give thee success, as he was with Moses. Prayers and supplications are to be made for all in authority, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. And the best thing we can ask of God for our magistrates is, that they may have the presence of God with them; that will make them blessings to us, so that in seeking this for them we consult our own interest. A reason is here intimated, why they should obey him as they had obeyed Moses, because they believed, (and in faith prayed) that God's presence would be with him as it was with Moses. Those that we have reason to think have favour from God, should have honour and respect from us. Some understand it as a limitation of their obedience; we will obey only as far as we perceive the Lord is with thee, but no farther. While thou keepest close to God, he will keep close to thee; hitherto shall our obedience come, but no farther. But they were so far from having any suspicion of Joshua's deviating from the divine rule, that there needed not such a proviso.

3. They pass an act to make it death for any Israelite to disobey Joshua's orders, or rebel against his commandments, ver. 18. Perhaps, if such a law had been made in Moses's time, it might have prevented many of the rebellions that were formed against him, for most men fear the sword of the magistrate more than the justice of God. Yet there was a special reason for the making of this law now they were entering upon the wars of Canaan, for in time of war the severity of military discipline is more necessary than at other times. Some think in this statute they have an eye to that law concerning the prophet God would raise up like unto Moses, which they think, though it refer chiefly to Christ, yet takes in Joshua by the way as a type of him, that whosoever would not hearken to him should be cut off from his people, Deut. xviii. 19. *I will require it of him*.

4. They animate him to go on with cheerfulness in the work to which God had called him, and in desiring that he would be strong and of a good courage, they do in effect promise him that they would do all they could: by an exact bold and cheerful observance of all his orders, to encourage him. It very much heartens those that lead in a good work, to see those that follow, follow with a good will. Joshua, though of approved valour, did not take it as an affront, but as a great kindness, for the people to bid him be strong and of a good courage.

C H A P. II.

In this chapter we have an account of the scouts that were employed to bring an account to Joshua of the posture of the city of Jericho: Observe here, 1. How Joshua sent them, ver. 1. 2. How Rahab received them, and protected them, and told a lie for them, ver. 2-7, so that they escaped out of the hands of the enemy. 3. The account she gave them of the present posture of Jericho, and the panic fear they were struck with upon the approach of Israel, ver. 8-11. 4. The bargain she made with them for the security of herself and her relations in the ruin she saw coming upon her city, ver. 12-15.

ver. 12—21. 5. *Their safe return to Joshua, and the account they give him of their expedition*, ver. 22—24. *And that which makes this story most remarkable is, that Rahab, the person principally concerned in it, is twice celebrated in the New Testament as a great believer*, Heb. xi. 31. *and as one whose faith proved itself by good works*, James ii. 25.

1. **A**ND Joshua, the son of Nun, sent out of Shittim two men, to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho: and they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there. 2. And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to-night of the children of Israel, to search out the country. 3. And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country. 4. And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were: 5. And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went, I wot not: pursue after them quickly, for ye shall overtake them. 6. But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof. 7. And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan, unto the fords; and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate.

In these verses we have,

1. The prudence of Joshua, in sending spies to observe this important pass which Israel was like to dispute at their entrance into Canaan, ver. 1. *Go view the land, even Jericho*. Moses had sent spies, Numb. xiii. Joshua himself was one of the n, and it proved of ill consequence: yet Joshua now sends spies, not as the former were sent to survey the whole land, but Jericho only; not to bring the account to the whole congregation, but to Joshua only; who, like a watchful general, was continually projecting for the public good, and was particularly in care to take the first step well, and not to stumble at the threshold. It was not fit that Joshua should disguise himself and venture over Jordan, to make his remarks *incognito*, but he sends two men, two young men (say the LXX) to view the land, that from their report he might take his measures in attacking Jericho. Observe, (1.) There is no remedy, but great men must see with other people's eyes, which makes it very necessary that they be cautious in the choice of those they employ, since so much many times depends upon their fidelity. (2.) Faith in God's promise ought not to supersede, but encourage our diligence in the use of proper means. Joshua is sure he has God with him, and yet sends men before him. We do not trust God, but tempt him, if our expectations slacken our endeavours. (3.) See how ready these men were to go upon this hazardous enterprise; though they put their lives in their hands, yet they ventured in obedience to Joshua their general, in zeal for the service of the camp, and in dependence upon the power of that God, who being the keeper of Israel in general, is the protector of every particular Israelite in the way of his duty.

2. The providence of God, directing the spies to the house of Rahab. How they got over Jordan we are not told, but into Jericho they came, which was about seven or eight miles from the river, and there seeking for a convenient inn, were directed to the house of Rahab, here called a harlot; a woman that had formerly been of ill fame, the reproach of which stuck to her name, though of late she had repented and reformed. Simeon the leper, (Matth. xxvi. 6.) though cleansed from his leprosy, wore the reproach of it in his name as long as he lived; so Rahab the harlot, and she is so called in the New Testament, where both her faith and her good works are praised; to teach us, 1. That the greatness of sin is no bar to pardoning mercy, if it be truly repented of in time. We read of publicans and harlots entering into the kingdom of the Messiah, and welcome to all the privileges of that kingdom, Matth. xxi. 31. 2. That there are many who before their conversion, were very wicked and vile, and yet afterwards come to great eminency in faith and holiness. 3. Even those that through grace have repented of the sins of their youth, must expect to bear the reproach of them, and when they hear of their old faults, must renew their repentance: and as an evidence of that, hear of them patiently.

God's Israel for aught appears, had but one friend, but one well-wisher in all Jericho, and that was Rahab a harlot. God has often served his own purposes and his Church's interests by men of none of the best morals. Had these scouts gone to any other house but this, they had certainly been betrayed and put to death without mercy. But God knew where they had a friend that would be true to them, though they did not, and directed them thither. Thus that which seems to us most contingent and accidental, is often over-ruled by the divine providence to serve its great ends. And those that faithfully acknowledge God in their ways, he will guide them with his eye. See Jer. xxxvi. 19—26.

3. The piety of Rahab in protecting and receiving these Israelites. Those that keep public houses entertain all comers, and think themselves obliged to be civil to their guests. But Rahab shewed her guests more than common civility, and went upon an uncommon principle in what she did; it was by faith that she received those with peace against whom her king and country had denounced war, Heb. xi. 31. (1.) She bid them welcome to her house, they lodged there, though it appears by what she said to them, ver. 9. she knew both whence they came, and what their business was. (2.) Perceiving that they were observed coming into the city, and umbrage taken from it, she hid them upon the roof of the house, which was flat, and covered them with stalks of flax, (ver. 6.) so that if the officers should come thither to search for them, there they might lie undiscovered. By these stalks of flax, which she herself had laid in order upon the roof to dry in the sun, in order to the beating of it, and making it ready for the wheel, it appears she had one of the good characters of the virtuous women, however in others of them she might be deficient, that she *seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands*, Prov. xxxi. 13. From which instance of her honest industry, one would hope, that whatever she had been formerly, she was not now a harlot. (3.) When she was examined concerning them, she denied they were in her house, turned off the officers that had a warrant to search for them with a sham, and so secured them. No marvel that the king of Jericho sent to enquire after them, ver. 2, 3. he had cause to fear

when the enemy was at his door, and his fear made him suspicious and jealous of all strangers: he had reason to demand from Rahab that she should bring forth the men to be dealt with as spies; but Rahab not only disowned that she knew them, or knew where they were: but that no farther search might be made for them in the city, told the pursuers they were gone away again, and in all probability might be overtaken, ver. 4, 5. Now, 1. We are sure this was a good work; it is canonized by the apostle, James ii. 25. where she is said to be justified by works, and this is instanced in that *she received the messengers and sent them out another way*, and she did it by faith, such a faith as set her above the fear of man, even of the wrath of the king. She believed upon the report she had heard of the wonders wrought for Israel, that their God was the only true God, and that therefore their declared design upon Canaan would undoubtedly take effect, and in this way she sided with them, protected them, and courted their favour. Had she said, I believe God is yours and Canaan is yours, but I dare not shew you any kindness, her faith had been dull and unactive, and would not have justified her. But by this it appeared to be both alive and lively, that she exposed herself to the utmost peril even of life in obedience to her faith. Note, Those only are true believers that can find in their hearts to venture for God; and those that by faith take the Lord for their God, take his people for their people, and cast in their lot among them. They that have God for their refuge and hiding place, must testify their gratitude by their readiness to shelter his people when there is occasion: *let mine out-casts dwell with thee*, Isa. xvi. 3, 4. And we must be glad of an opportunity of testifying the sincerity and zeal of our love to God, by hazardous services to his Church and kingdom among men. But, 2. There is that in it which it is not easy to justify, and yet it must be justified, or else it could not be so good a work as to justify her. (1.) It is plain she betrayed her country by harbouring the enemies of it, and aiding those that were designing its destruction, which could not consist with her allegiance to her prince, and her affection and duty to the community she was a member of. But that which justifies her in this is, that *she knew the Lord had given Israel this land*, ver. 9. knew it by the incontestible miracles God had wrought for them, which confirmed that grant; and her obligations to God were higher than her obligations to any other: If she knew God had given him this land, it would have been a sin to join with those that hindered them of it. But since no such grant of any land to any people now can be proved, this will by no means justify any such treacherous practices against the public welfare. (2.) It is plain she deceived the officers that examined her with an untruth, That she knew not whence the men were, that they were gone out, that she knew not whither they were gone. What shall we say to this? If she had either told the truth, or been silent, she had betrayed the spies, and that had certainly been a greater sin; and it doth not appear that she had any other way of concealing them, but by this ironical direction to the officers to pursue them another way, which if they would suffer themselves to be deceived by, let them be deceived. None are bound to accuse themselves, or their friends, of that which though enquired after as a crime they know to be a virtue. This case was altogether extraordinary, and therefore cannot be drawn into a precedent; and that may be justified here which would be by no means lawful in a common case. Rahab knew by what was already done on the other side Jordan, that no mercy was to be shewed to the Canaanites, and from thence inferred, if mercy was not owing them, truth was not; they that might be destroyed might be deceived. Yet divines generally conceive that it was a sin, and inexcusable, that being a Canaanite she was not better taught the evil of lying; but God accepted her faith and pardoned her infirmity: however it was in this case, we are sure it is our duty to speak every man the truth of his neighbour, to dread and detest lying, and never do evil, that good may come of it, Rom. iii. 8. But God accepts what is sincerely and honestly intended, though there be a mixture of frailty and folly in it, and is not extreme to mark what we do amiss. Some suggest that what she said might possibly be true of some other men.

8. ¶ And before they were laid down she came up unto them upon the roof: 9. And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. 10. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red-sea for you, when you came out of Egypt; and what you did unto the two kings of the Amorites that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon, and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. 11. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. 12. Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house: and give me a true token: 13. And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death. 14. And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee. 15. Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town-wall, and she dwelt upon the wall. 16. And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you: and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterwards may ye go your way. 17. And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear. 18. Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household home unto thee. 19. And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless; and whosoever

ever shall be with thee in the house, his blood *shall be* on our head, if *any* hand be upon him. 20. And if thou utter this our business, then will we be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear. 21. And she said, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and the bound the scarlet line in the window.

The matter is here settled between Rahab and the spies, what service she was now to do for them, and what favour they were afterwards to shew her. She secures them on condition that they should secure her.

1. She gives them, and by them sends to Joshua and Israel, all the encouragement that could be desired, to make their intended descent upon Canaan. This was what they came for, and it was worth coming for. Being got clear of the officers, she comes up to them to the roof of the house where they lay hid, finds them perhaps somewhat dismayed at the peril they apprehended themselves in from the officers, and scarce recovered from the fright, but has that to say to them which will give them abundant satisfaction. (1.) She lets them know that the report of the great things God had done for them was come to Jericho, ver. 10. not only that they had an account of their late victories obtained over the Amorites in the neighbouring country, on the other side the river, but their miraculous deliverance out of Egypt, and passage through the Red sea, a great way off, and forty years ago, were remembered and talked of afresh in Jericho, to the amazement of every body. Thus this Joshua and his fellows were *men wondered at*, Zech. iii. 8. See how God *makes his wonderful works to be remembered*, Psal. cxi. 4. so that *men shall speak of the might of his terrible acts*, Psal. cxlv. 6. (2.) She tells them what impressions the tidings of these things had made upon the Canaanites; *your terror is fallen upon us*, ver. 9. *our hearts did melt*, ver. 11. if she kept a public house, that would give her an opportunity of understanding the sense of various companies, and of travellers from other parts of the country; so that they could not know this any way better than by her information; and it would be of mighty use to Joshua and Israel to know it; it would put courage into the most cowardly Israelite to hear how their enemies were dispirited; and it was easy to conclude, that they who now fainted before them, would infallibly fall before them: Especially because it was the accomplishment of a promise God had made them, that he would *lay the fear and dread of them upon all this land*, Deut. xi. 25. and so it would be an earnest of the accomplishment of all the other promises God had made them. Let not the stout man glory in his courage any more than the strong man in his strength, for God can weaken both mind and body. Let not God's Israel be afraid of their most powerful enemies, for their God can, when he pleaseth, make their most powerful enemies afraid of them. Let none think to harden their hearts against God and prosper, for he that made man's soul can at any time make the sword of his terrors approach to it. (3.) She hereupon makes profession of her faith in God and his promise; and perhaps *there was not found so great faith*, (all things considered) *no not in Israel*, as in this woman of Canaan. 1. She believes God's power and dominion over all the world, ver. 11. Jehovah, your God whom your worship and call upon is so far above all gods, that he is the only true God; for *he is God in heaven above and in earth beneath*, and is served by all the hosts of both. A vast distance there is between heaven and earth, yet both are equally under the inspection and government of the great Jehovah. Heaven is not above his power, nor earth below his cognizance. 2. She believes his promise to his people Israel, ver. 9. *I know that the Lord hath given you the land*. The king of Jericho had heard as much as she had of the great things God had done for Israel, yet he cannot infer from thence that the Lord had given them this land, but resolves to hold it out against them to the last extremity: For the most powerful means of conviction will not of themselves attain the end without divine grace, and by that grace, Rahab the harlot, who had only heard of the wonders God had wrought, speaks with more assurance of the truth of the promise made to the fathers, than all the elders of Israel had done, who were eye-witnesses of those wonders, many of whom perished through unbelief of this promise. *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed; so Rahab did; O woman, great is thy faith!*

2. She engaged them to take her and her relations under their protection, that they might not perish in the destruction of Jericho, ver. 12, 13. Now, (1.) It was an evidence of the sincerity and strength of her faith concerning the approaching revolution in her country, that she was so solicitous to make an interest for herself with the Israelites, and courted their kindness. She foresaw the conquest of her country, and in the belief of that bespoke in time the favour of the conquerors. Thus Noah being moved with fear prepared an ark to the saving of his house, and the condemning of the world, Heb. xi. 7. They who truly believe the divine revelation, concerning the ruin of sinners, and the grant of the heavenly land to God's Israel, will give diligence to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life, by joining themselves to God and to his people. (2.) The provision she made for the safety of her relations, as well as for her own, is a laudable instance of natural affection, and an intimation to us in like manner; to do all we can for the salvation of the souls of those that are dear to us, and, with ourselves, to bring them, if possible, into the bond of the covenant. No mention is made of her or of her husband and children, but only her parents and brothers and sisters, whom though she was herself a house-keeper she retained a due concern for. (3.) Her request that they would swear unto her by Jehovah, is an instance of her acquaintance with the only true God, and her faith in him, and devotion towards him, one act of which is religiously to swear by his name. (4.) Her petition, which is very just and reasonable, and since she had protected them they should protect her; and since her kindness to them extended to their people, for whom they were now negotiating, their kindness to her should take in all her's. It was the least they could do for one that had saved their lives with the hazard of her own. Note, Those that shew mercy may expect to find mercy. Observe, She doth not demand any preferment by way of return, for her kindness to them, though they lay so much at her mercy that she might have made her own terms, but only indents for her life, which in a general destruction would be a singular favour. Thus God promised Ebed Melech, in recompense for his kindness to Jeremiah, that in the worst of times he should have *his life for a prey*, Jer. xxxix. 18. Yet this Rahab was afterwards advanced to be a princess in Israel, the wife of Salmon, and one of the ancestors of Christ, Mat. i. 5. Those that faithfully serve Christ and suffer for him, he will not only protect them, but prefer them, and will do for them *more than they are able to ask or think*.

3. They solemnly engaged for her preservation in the common destruction, ver. 14. *Our life for yours*. We will take as much care of your lives as our own, and would as soon hurt ourselves as any of you: Nay, they imprecate God's judgments on themselves, if they should violate their promise to her. She had pawned her life for theirs, and now they in requital

pawned their lives for hers, and (as public persons) with them they pawn the public faith and the credit of their nation, for they plainly interest all Israel in the engagement in those words, *When the Lord has given us the land*, meaning not themselves only, but the people whose agents they were, No doubt they knew themselves sufficiently authorized to treat with Rahab concerning this matter, and were confident that Joshua would ratify what they did, else they had not dealt honestly; the general law, that they should make no covenant, with the Canaanites, (Deut. vii. 2.) did not forbid them to take under their protection a particular person, that was heartily come into their interests, and had done them real kindnesses: The law of gratitude is one of the laws of nature. Now observe here,

(1.) The promises they made her. In general, *We will deal kindly and truly with thee*, ver. 14. We will not only be kind in promising now, but true in performing what we promise; and not only true in performing just what we promise; but kind in out-doing thy demands and expectations. The goodness of God is often expressed by his kindness and truth, (Psal. cxvii. 2.) and in both these we must be followers of him. In particular, if a *hand be upon any in the house with thee, his blood shall be upon our head*, ver. 19. If hurt come through our carelessness to those whom we are obliged to protect, we thereby contract guilt, and blood will be found a heavy load.

(2.) The provisos and limitations of their promises. Though they were in haste and it may be in some confusion, yet we find them very cautious in settling this agreement and the terms of it, not to bind themselves to more than was fit for them to perform. Note, Covenants must be made with care, and we must swear in judgment, lest we find ourselves perplexed and intangled when it is too late *after vows to make inquiry*. They that will be conscientious in keeping their promises will be cautious in making them, and perhaps may insert conditions which others may think frivolous.

Three provisos their promise is here clogged with, and they were necessary ones. They will protect Rahab, and all her relations always, provided, (1.) That she tie the scarlet cord, with which she was now about to let them down, in the window of her house, ver. 18. This was to be a mark upon the house which the spies would take care to give notice of to the camp of Israel, that no soldier, how hot and eager soever he was in military execution, might offer any violence to the house that was thus distinguished. This was like the blood sprinkled upon the door-post, which secured the first-born from the destroying angel, and being of the same colour, some say this alludes also to represent the safety of believers, under the protection of the blood of Christ sprinkled on the conscience. The same cord that she made use of for the preservation of these Israelites, was to be made use of for her preservation. What we serve and honour God with, we may expect he will bless and make comfortable to us. (2.) That she should have all those whose safety she had desired to the house with her, and keep them there, and that, at the time of taking the town, none of them should dare to stir out of doors, ver. 18, 19. This was a necessary proviso, for Rahab's kindred could not be distinguished any other way than by being in her distinguished house; should they mingle themselves with their neighbours, there was no remedy, but the sword would devour *one as well as another*. It was a reasonable proviso, that since they were saved purely or Rahab's sake, her house would have the honour of being their castle; and that, if they would not *perish with them that believe not*, they should thus far believe the certainty and severity of the ruin coming upon their city, as to retire into a place made safe by promise, as Noah into the ark, and Lot into Zoar, and should *save themselves from this untoward generation*, by separating from them. It was likewise a significant proviso, intimating to us that those who are added to the Church that they may be saved, must keep close to the society of the faithful, and having *escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*, must take heed of being again intangled therein. (3.) That she should keep counsel, ver. 14—20. *If thou utter this our business*, i. e. if thou betray us when we are gone, or if thou make this agreement public, so as that others tie scarlet lines in their windows, and so confound us, then we will be quit of thine oath. They are unworthy of the secret of the Lord, that know not how to keep it to themselves when there is occasion.

4. She then took effectual care to secure her new friends, and sent them out another way, James ii. 25. Having fully understood the bargain they made with her, and consented to it, ver. 21. she then *let them down by a cord* over the city wall, ver. 15. the situation of her house befriending them herein: Thus Paul made his escape out of Damascus, 2 Cor. xi. 33. She also directed them which way to go for their own safety, being better acquainted with the country than they were, ver. 16. She directed them to leave the high road, and ascend in the mountains till the pursuers were returned, for till then they could not safely venture over Jordan. Those that are in the way of God and their duty, may expect that providence would protect them, but that will not excuse them from taking all prudent methods for their own safety. God will keep us, but then we must not willfully expose ourselves. Providence must be trusted, but not tempted. Calvin thinks, that their charge to Rahab to keep this matter secret, and not to utter it, was intended for her safety, lest the boasting of her security from the sword of Israel, should before they came to protect her fall into the hands of the king of Jericho, and be put to death for treason: thus do they prudently advise her for her safety, as she advised them for theirs. And it is good advice, which we should at any time be thankful for, *to take heed to ourselves*.

22. And they went and came unto the mountain, and abode there three days, until the pursuers were returned. And the pursuers fought them throughout all the way but found them not. 23. ¶ So the two men returned, and descended from the mountain, and passed over, and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all things that befel them. 24. And they said unto Joshua, Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.

We have here the safe return of the spies Joshua had sent, and the great encouragement they brought with them to Israel to proceed in their descent upon Canaan. Had they been minded to discourage the people, as the evil spies did that Moses sent, they might have told them what they had observed of the height and strength of the walls of Jericho, and the extraordinary vigilance of the king of Jericho, and how narrowly they escaped out of his hands; but they were of another spirit, and depending themselves upon the divine promise, they animated Joshua likewise.

1. Their return in safety was itself an encouragement to Joshua, and a token for good. That God provided for them so good a friend as Rahab was, in an enemy's country, and that notwithstanding the rage of the king of Jericho, and the eagerness of the pursuers, they were come back in peace, was such an instance of God's great care concerning them for Israel's sake, as might assure the people of the divine conduct and care they were under,

under, which would undoubtedly make the progress of their arms glorious. He that so wonderfully protected their scouts, would preserve their men of war, and cover their heads in the day of battle.

2. The report they brought was much more encouraging, *ver. 24. all the inhabitants of the country, though resolved to stand it out, yet do faint because of us, they have neither wisdom to yield, nor courage to fight; whence they conclude, Truly the Lord has delivered into our hands all the land,* it is all our own, we have nothing to do, in effect, but to take possession. Sinners' frights are sometimes sure prefaces of their fall. If we resist our spiritual enemies they will flee before us, which will encourage us to hope, that in due time we shall be more than conquerors.

C H A P. III.

This chapter, and that which follows it, give us the history of Israel's passing through Jordan into Canaan, and a very memorable history it is: Long after they are bid to remember, what God did for them between Shittim (whence they decamped, ver. 1.) and Gilgal, where they next pitched, chap. iv. 19. Mich. vi. 5. That they might know the righteousness of the Lord. By Joshua's order they marched up to the river's side, ver. 1. and then Almighty-power led them through it. They passed through the Red sea unexpectedly, and in their flight by night, but they have notice some time before of their passing through Jordan, and their expectations raised. (1.) The people are directed to follow the ark, ver. 2—4. (2.) They are commanded to sanctify themselves, ver. 5. (3.) The priests with the ark are ordered to lead the van, ver. 6. (4.) Joshua is magnified and made commander in chief, ver. 7, 8. (5.) Public notice is given of what God is about to do for them, ver. 9—13. (6.) The thing is done, Jordan is divided, and Israel brought safely through it, ver. 14—17. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

1. **A**ND Joshua rose early in the morning, and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over. 2. And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host; 3. And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. 4. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore. 5. And Joshua said unto the priests, Sanctify yourselves: for to-morrow the LORD will do wonders among you. 6. And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people.

Rahab, in mentioning to the spies the drying up of the Red-sea, chap. ii. 10. as that which terrified the Canaanites more than any thing else, intimates that they on that side the water expected that Jordan, that great defence of their country, would in like manner give way to them; whether the Israelites had any expectation of it doth not appear. God often did things for them which they looked not for, Isa. lxiv. 3. Now here we are told,

1. That they came to Jordan and lodged there, ver. 1. Though they were not yet told how they should pass the river, and were unprovided for the passing of it in any ordinary way, yet they went forward in faith, having been told, chap. i. 11. that they should pass it. We must go on in the way of our duty, though we foresee difficulties, trusting God to help us through them when we come to them. Let us proceed as far as we can, and depend on divine sufficiency for that which we find ourselves not sufficient for. In this march Joshua led them, and particular notice is taken of his early rising; as there is afterwards upon other occasions, chap. vi. 12.—vii. 16.—viii. 10. which intimates how little he loved his ease, how much he loved his business, and what care and pains he was willing to take in it. Those that would bring great things to pass must rise early, *Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty.* Joshua herein set a good example to the officers under him, and taught them to rise early, and to all that are in public stations, especially to attend continually to the duty of the place.

2. That the people were directed to follow the ark; officers were appointed to go through the host to give these directions, ver. 2. that every Israelite might know both what to do, and what to depend upon. 1. They might depend upon the ark to lead them; i. e. upon God himself, of whose presence the ark was an instituted sign and token. It seems the pillar of cloud and fire was removed, else that had led them, unless we suppose that it now hovered over the ark, and so they had a double guide, honour was put upon the ark, and a defence upon that glory. It is called here the ark of the covenant of the Lord their God. What greater encouragement could they have than this, that the Lord was their God, a God in covenant with them, for here was the ark of his covenant; if God beours, we need not to fear any evil. And that he was nigh to them, present with them, went before them. What could come amiss to them that were thus guided, thus guarded? Formerly the ark was carried in the midst of the camp, but now it went before them to *search out a resting place* for them, Numb. x. 33. and, as it were, to give them livery and seisin of the promised land, and put them in possession of it. In the ark the tables of the law were, and over it the mercy-seat, for the divine law and grace reigning in the heart are the surest pledges of God's presence and favour; and those that would be led to the heavenly Canaan, must take the law of God for their guide. (*If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*) and have the great propitiation in their eyes, *looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.* 2. They might depend upon the priests and Levites, who were appointed for that purpose to carry the ark before them. The work of ministers is to hold forth the word of life; and to take care of the administration of those ordinances, which are the tokens of God's presence, and the instruments of his power and grace; and herein they must go before the people of God in their way to heaven.

3. The people must follow the ark. *Remove from your place, and go after it; (1.) As those that are resolved never to forsake it; wherever God's ordinances are, there we must be; if they stir, we must remove and go after them. (2.) As those that are entirely satisfied in its conduct, that it will lead in the best way to the best end; and therefore, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.* This must be all their care, to attend the motion of the ark, and follow it with an implicit faith. Thus must we walk after the rule of the word, and the direction of the Spirit in every thing, so shall peace be upon us, as it now was upon the Israel of God. They must follow the priests as far as they carried the ark, but no farther, so we must follow our ministers only as they follow Christ. 4. In following the ark, they must keep their distance, ver. 4. They must none of them come within a thousand yards of the ark; 1. They must thus express their awful and reverend regard to that token of God's presence, lest its familiarity with them should breed contempt. This charge to them, not to come near, was agreeable to that dispensation of darkness, bondage, and terror; but we now through Christ have access with boldness. 2. Thus it was made to appear, that the ark was able to protect itself, and needed not to be guarded by the men of war, but was itself a guard to them. With what a noble defiance of the enemy did it leave all its friends half a mile behind, but the unarmed priests that carried it, as perfectly sufficient for its own safety and theirs that followed it. 3. Thus it was the better seen by those that were to be led by it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go, seeing it, as it were, chalked out or tracked by the ark. Had they been allowed to come near it, they would have surrounded it, and none would have had the sight of it but those that were close to it, but being put at such a distance before them, they would all have the satisfaction of seeing it, and would be animated by the sight. And it was with good reason that this provision was made for their encouragement, *for ye have not passed this way heretofore.* This had been the character all their way through the wilderness, it was an untrodden path, but this especially through Jordan. While we are here we must expect and prepare for unusual events, to pass ways that we have not passed before; and much more when we go hence, our way through the valley of the shadow of death, is a way we have not gone before, which makes it the more formidable. But if we have the assurance of God's presence we need not fear, that will furnish us with such strength as we never had, when we come to do a work we never did.

3. They were commanded to sanctify themselves, prepare to attend the ark, and good reason, *for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you,* ver. 5. See how magnificently he speaks of God's works; he doth wonders, and is therefore to be adored, admired, and trusted in. See how intimately acquainted Joshua was with the divine councils, he could tell beforehand what God would do, and when. See what preparations we must make to receive the discoveries of God's glory and the communications of his grace, we must sanctify ourselves. This we must do when we are to attend the ark, and God by it is about to do wonders among us; we must separate ourselves from all other cares, devote ourselves to God's honour, and cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. The people of Israel were now entering into the holy land, and therefore must sanctify themselves. God was about to give them uncommon instances of his favour, which by meditation and prayer they must compose their minds to a very careful observation of, that they might give God the glory, and take to themselves the comfort of these appearances.

4. The priests were ordered to take up the ark, and carry it before the people, ver. 6. It was the Levites work ordinarily to carry the ark, Numb. iv. 15. But on this great occasion the priests were ordered to do it. And they did as they were commanded, took up the ark, and did not think themselves disparaged, went before the people, and did not think themselves exposed, the ark they carried was both their honour and their defence. And now we may suppose that prayer of Moses used, when the ark set forward, Numb. x. 35. *Rise up, Lord, and let mine enemies be scattered.* Magistrates are here instructed to stir up ministers to their work, and to make use of their authority for the furtherance of religion; ministers must likewise learn to go before in the way of God, and not to shrink or draw back when dangers are before them. They must expect to be most struck at, but they know whom they have trusted.

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7. ¶ And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. 8. And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan. 9. ¶ And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God. 10. And Joshua said, Herby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you, the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites. 11. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan. 12. Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man. 13. And it shall come to pass as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the LORD of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above: and they shall stand upon an heap.

We may observe here how God honours Joshua, and, by this wonderful work he is about to do, designs to make Israel know that he is their governor. And then how Joshua honours God, and endeavours by it to make Israel know that he is their God. Thus those that honour God he will honour, and those whom he has advanced, should do what they can in their places to exalt him.

1. God speaks to Joshua to put honour upon him, ver. 7, 8. (1.) It was a great honour God did him that he spake to him, as he had done to Moses from off the mercy-seat, before the priest removed it with the ark. This would make Joshua easy in himself and great among the people, that God was pleased to speak so familiarly to him. 2. That he designed to magnify him in the sight of all Israel. He had told him before he would be with him, chap. i. 5. that comforted him, but now all Israel shall see it, and that magnified him. Those are truly great with

with whom God is, and whom he employs and owns in his service. God magnified him, because he would have the people magnify him. Pious magistrates are to be highly honoured and esteemed as public blessings; and the more we see of God with them, the more we should honour them. By the dividing of the Red-sea Israel was convinced that God was with Moses in bringing them out of Egypt; therefore they are said to be baptized unto Moses in the sea, 1 Cor. x. 2. And upon that occasion they believed him, Exod. xiv. 31. And now by the dividing of Jordan, they shall be convinced, that God is in like manner with Joshua in bringing them into Canaan. God had magnified Joshua before on several occasions, but now he began to magnify him as the successor of Moses in the government. Some have observed, it was at the banks of Jordan that God began to magnify Joshua, and at the same place he began to magnify our Lord Jesus as mediator: for John was baptizing at Bethabara, the house of passage, and there it was, that when our Saviour was baptized, it was proclaimed concerning him, *This is my beloved Son*.

(3.) That by him he gave orders to the priests themselves, though they were his immediate attendants, ver. 8. *Thou shalt command the priests, i. e. thou shalt make known to them the divine command in this matter, and take care that they observe it, to stand still at the brink of Jordan while the waters part, that it may appear to be at the presence of the Lord, of the mighty God of Jacob, that Jordan is driven back*, Psal. cxiv. 5—7. God could have divided the river without the priests, but they could not without him. The priests must herein set a good example to the people, and teach them to do their utmost in the service of God, and trust for help in time of need.

2. Joshua speaks to the people, and therein honours God.

1. He demands attention, ver. 9. *Come hither to me*, as many as can come within hearing, and before you see the works, *hear the word of the Lord your God*, that you may compare them together and they may illustrate each other. He had commanded them to sanctify themselves, and therefore calls them to *hear the word of God*, for that is the ordinary means of sanctification, John xvii. 17.

2. He now tells them at length, by what way they should pass over Jordan; by the stopping of its stream, ver. 13. *The waters of Jordan shall be cut off*. God could by a sudden and miraculous frost have congealed the surface, so that they might all have gone over upon the ice; but that being a thing sometimes done even in that country, by the ordinary power of nature, Job xxxviii. 30. it would not have been such an honour to Israel's God, nor such a terror to Israel's enemies; it must therefore be done in such a way as had no precedent but the dividing of the Red sea: and that miracle is here repeated, to shew that God has the same power to finish the salvation of his people, that he had to begin it, for he is the *alpha* and the *omega*; and that the word of the Lord (as the Chaldee reads it, ver. 7.) the essential; eternal word was as truly with Joshua, as he was with Moses. And by the dividing of the waters from the waters; and the making of the dry land to appear which had been covered, God would mind them of that, which Moses by revelation had instructed them in, concerning the work of creation, Gen. i. 6—9. That by what they now saw, their belief of that which they there read might be assisted, and they might know that the God whom they worshipped, was the same God who made that world, and it was the same power that was engaged and employed for them.

3. The people having been directed before to follow the ark, are here told that it should *pass before them into Jordan*, ver. 11. Observe, (1.) The ark of the covenant must be their guide. During the reign of Moses the cloud was their guide, but now, in Joshua's reign, the ark, both visible signs of God's presence and perdescency; but divine grace under the Mosaic dispensation was wrapt up as in a cloud and covered with a veil, but by Christ, our Joshua, it is revealed in the ark of the covenant unveiled. (2.) It is called *the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth*. He that is your God, ver. 9: in covenant with you, is the *Lord of all the earth*, has both right and power to command, control, use and dispose of all nations, of all creatures. He is the *Lord of all the earth*, therefore he needs not you, nor can he be benefited by you; therefore it is your honour and happiness to have him in covenant with you; if he be yours, all the creatures are at your service, and when he pleaseth shall be employed for you. When we are praising and worshipping God as Israel's God, and ours through Christ, we must remember that he is the *Lord of the whole earth*, and reverence him, and trust in him accordingly. Some observe an accent in the original, which they think directs us to translate it somewhat more emphatically, *Behold the ark of the covenant, even the ark of the Lord, or even of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth*. (3.) They are told that the ark should *pass before them into Jordan*; God would not appoint them to go any where but where he himself would go before them, and go with them; and they might safely venture, even into Jordan itself, if the ark of the covenant led them. While we make God's precepts our rule, his promises our stay, and his providence our guide, we need not dread the greatest difficulties we may meet with in the way of duty. That promise is sure to all the seed, Isa. xlii. 2. *When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee*.

4. From what God was now about to do for them, he infers an assurance of what he would yet farther do. This he mentions first, so much was his heart upon it, and so great a satisfaction did it give him, ver. 10. *Hereby ye shall know that the living God*, (the true God, and God of power, not one of the dead gods of the heathen) *is among you*, though you see him not; nor are to have any image of him; is among you to give you law, secure your welfare, and receive your homage; is among you in this great undertaking now before you; and therefore you shall, nay, he himself will, without fail, *drive out from before you the Canaanites*. So that the dividing of Jordan was intended to be to them, (1.) A sure token of God's presence with them; by this they could not but know that God was among them, unless their unbelief was as obstinate against the most convincing evidence, as that of their fathers was, who presently after God had divided the Red-sea before them, impudently asked, *Is the Lord among us, or is he not*? Exod. xvii. 7. (2.) A sure pledge of the conquest of Canaan; if the living God is among you, expelling he will expel, (so the Hebrew phrase is) *from before you the Canaanites*. He will do it certainly, and do it effectually, what should hinder him? What can stand in his way, before whom rivers are divided, and dried up? The forcing of the lines was a certain preface of the ruin of all their hosts: how could they stand their ground, when Jordan itself was driven back? When they had not courage to dispute this pass, but trembled at the approach of the mighty Goliath of Jacob, Psal. cxiv. 7. What opposition could they ever make after this? This assurance which Joshua here gives them, was so well grounded, as that it would enable one Israelite to chase a thousand Canaanites, and two to put ten thousand to flight: and it would be abundantly strengthened by remembering the song of Moses, dictated forty years before, which plainly foretold the dividing of Jordan, and the influence that would have upon the driving out of the Canaanites, Exod. xv. 15, 16, 17. *The inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away, and so be effectually driven out, they shall be as still as a stone till thy people pass over and then thou shalt bring them in and plant them*. Note, God's glorious ap-

pearances for his Church and people, ought to be improved by us for the encouragement of our faith and hope for the future, *As for God, his work is perfect*. If Jordan's flood cannot keep them out, Canaan's force cannot turn them out again.

5. He directs them to get twelve men ready, one of each tribe, who must be within call, to receive such orders as Joshua should afterwards give them, ver. 12. It doth not appear that they were to attend the priests, and wake with them when they carried the ark, that they might more immediately be witnesses of the wonders done by it, as some think; but they were to be at hand for the service they were called to, chap. iv. 4.

14. ¶ And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people: 15. And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest). 16. That the waters which came down from above, stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. 17. And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.

Here we have a short and plain account of the dividing of the river Jordan, and the passage of the children of Israel through it. The story is not garnished with the flowers of rhetoric, yet need not to be painted; but it tells us, in short, matter of fact.

1. That this river was now broader and deeper than usually it was at other times of the year, ver. 15. The melting of the snow on the mountains of Lebanon, near which this river had its rise, was the occasion, that, at the time of harvest, barley harvest, which was the spring of the year, Jordan overflowed all his banks. This great flood, just at that time, (which providence might have restrained for once, or have ordered their going over at another time of the year) very much magnified the power of God and his kindness to Israel. Note, Though the opposition given to the salvation of God's people, have all imaginable advantages, yet God can and will conquer it. Let the banks of Jordan be filled to the brink, filled till they run over, it is as easy to omnipotence to divide them, and dry them up, as if they were never so narrow, never so shallow, it is all one with the Lord.

2. That as soon as ever the feet of the priests dipped in the brim of the water, the stream stopped immediately, as if a sluice had been let down to dam it up, ver. 15, 16. So that the waters above swelled, stood on a heap, and ran back, and yet, as it should seem, did not spread but congealed; which unaccountable rising of the river was observed with amazement, by those that lived upon it many miles off, and the remembrance of it remained among them long after; the waters on the other side this invincible dam ran down of course, and left the bottom of the river dry as far downwards, it is likely, as they swelled upwards. When they passed through the Red-sea, the waters were a wall on either hand, here only on the right-hand. Note, The God of nature can, when he pleaseth, change the course of nature, and alter its properties, can turn fluids into solids, *waters into standing rocks*, as, on the contrary, *rocks into standing waters*, to serve his own purposes. See Psal. cxiv. 5—8. What cannot God do? What will he not do for the perfecting of his people's salvation? Sometimes he cleaves the earth with rivers, Hab. iii. 9. and sometimes, as here, cleaves the rivers without earth. It is easy to imagine how, when the course of this strong and rapid stream was arrested on a sudden, the waters roared and was troubled, so that the mountains seemed to shake with the swelling thereof, Psal. xlv. 3. *how the floods lift up their voice, the floods lifted up their waves*, while the Lord on high shewed himself mightier than the noise of these many waters, Psal. xciii. 3, 4. With reverence to this, the prophet asks, *Was the Lord displeased against the rivers, was thine anger against the rivers*? Hab. iii. 8. No, *Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people*, ver. 13. In allusion to this, it is foretold among the great things God will do for the Gospel-Church in the latter days, that the great river Euphrates shall be dried up, that the way of the kings of the east may be prepared, Rev. xvi. 12. When the time is come for Israel's entrance into the land of promise, all difficulties shall be conquered, *Mountains shall become plains*, Zech. iv. 7. and rivers become dry, for the *ranjomed of the Lord to pass over*. When we have finished our pilgrimage through this wilderness, death will be like this Jordan between us and the heavenly Canaan, but the ark of the covenant has prepared us a way through it, it is the last enemy that shall be destroyed.

3. That the people passed over right against Jericho, which was, (1.) An instance of their boldness, and a noble defiance of their enemies; Jericho was one of the strongest cities, and yet they dare face it at their first entrance. (2.) It was an encouragement to them to venture through Jordan, for Jericho was a goodly city, and the country about it extremely pleasant, having that in view as their own, what difficulties could discourage them from taking possession? (3.) It would increase the confusion and terror of their enemies, who, no doubt, strictly observed their motions, and were the amazed spectators of this work of wonders.

4. That the priests stood still in the midst of Jordan while all the people passed over, ver. 17. There the ark was appointed to be, to shew that the same power that parted the waters kept them parted as long as there was occasion; and had not the divine presence, of which the ark was a token, been their security, the water had returned upon them and buried them. There the priests were appointed to stand still, (1.) To try their faith, whether they could venture to take their post when God assigned it them, with mountains of water over their heads: as they made a bold stand when they tarried longest in Jordan, but they knew they carried their own protection with them. Note, Ministers in times of peril should be examples of courage and confidence in the divine goodness. (2.) It was to encourage the faith of the people, that they might go triumphantly into Canaan, and fear no evil, no not in this valley of the shadow of death, (for so the divided river was) being assured of God's presence, which interposed between them and the greatest danger, between them and the proud waters, which otherwise had gone over their souls. Thus in the greatest dangers the saints are comforted with his rod and his staff, Psal. xxiii. 4.

C H A P. IV.

This chapter gives a farther account of the miraculous passage of Israel through Jordan; 1. The provision that was made at that time to preserve the memorial of it, by twelve stones set up in Jordan, ver. 9. and other twelve stones taken up out of Jordan, ver. 1—8. 2. The march of the people through Jordan's channel, the two tribes first, then all the people, and the priests that bear the ark last, ver. 10—14. 3. The closing of the waters again upon their coming up with the ark, ver. 15—19. 4. The erecting of the monument of Gilgal, to preserve the remembrance of this work of wonder to posterity, ver. 20—24.

1. **A**ND it came to pass when all the people were clean passed over Jordan, that the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying, 2. Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man, 3. And command you them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place where ye shall lodge this night. 4. Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man. 5. And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of Jordan, and take you up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel: 6. That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? 7. Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever. 8. And the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the LORD spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. 9. And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there unto this day.

We may well imagine how busy Joshua and all the men of war were, while they were passing over Jordan, when besides their own marching into an enemy's country and in the face of the enemy, which could not but occasion them many thoughts of heart, they had their wives, and children, and families, their cattle, and tents, and all their effects, bag and baggage, to convey by this strange and untrodden path, which we must suppose either very muddy or very stony, troublesome to the weak, and frightful to the timorous, the descent to the bottom of the river, and the ascent out of it steep, so that every man must needs have his head full of care and his hands full of business, and Joshua more than any of them. And yet in the midst of all this hurry, care must be taken to perpetuate the memorial of this wonderful work of God, and this care might not be adjourned to a time of greater leisure. Note, How much sorer we have to do of business for ourselves and our families, we must not neglect or omit what we have to do for the glory of God and the serving of his honour, for that is our best business.

Now, 1. God gave orders for the preparing of his memorial. Had Joshua done it without divine direction, it might have looked like a design to perpetuate his own name and honour, nor would it have commanded so sacred and venerable a regard from posterity, as now; when God himself appointed it. Note, God's works of wonder ought to be kept in everlasting remembrance, and means devised for the preserving of the memorial of them. Some of the Israelites that passed over Jordan perhaps were so stupid, and so little affected with this great favour of God to them, that they were in no care to have it remembered; while others, it may be, were so much affected with it, and had such deep impressions made upon them by it, that they thought there needed no memorial of it to be erected, the heart and tongue of every Israelite in every age would be a living lasting monument of it. But God, knowing their frame, and how apt they had been soon to forget his works, ordered an expedient for the keeping of this in remembrance to all generations, that those who could not, or would not, read the record of it in the sacred history, might come to the knowledge of it by the monument set up in remembrance of it, which the common tradition of the country would be an explication of; it would likewise serve to corroborate the proof of the matter of fact, and would remain a standing evidence of it to those that in after ages might question the truth of it.

A monument is to be erected, and (1.) Joshua, as chief captain, must give directions about it, ver. 1. When all the people were clean passed over Jordan, not so much as the feeble, that were hindmost of them, left behind, so that God had done his work completely, every Israelite got safe into Canaan, then God spake unto Joshua to provide materials for this monument. It is the pious conjecture of the learned Bishop Patrick, that Joshua was gone into some place of retirement, to return thanks immediately for this wonderful mercy, and then God met him, and spake thus to him. Or, perhaps, it was by Eleazar the priest, that God gave these and other instructions to Joshua, for though he is not mentioned here; yet when Joshua was ordained by the imposition of hands to this great trust, God appointed that Eleazar should ask counsel for him after the judgment of Uriah, and at his word, Joshua and all the children of Israel, must go and come in, Numb. xvii. 21. (2.) One man out of each tribe, and he a chosen man, must be employed to prepare materials for this monument, that each tribe might have the story told them by one of themselves, and each tribe might contribute something to the glory of God thereby, ver. 2, 4. Out of every tribe a man. Not the Levites only, but every Israelite must, in his place, help to

make known to the sons of men God's mighty acts, Psal. cxlv. 12. The two tribes, though seated already in their possession, yet sharing in the mercy, must lend a hand to the memorial of it. (3.) The stones that must be set up for this memorial, are ordered to be taken out of the midst of the channel (where, probably, there lay abundance of great stones) and as near as might be from the very place where the priests stood with the ark, ver. 3, 5. This intended monument deserved to have been made of stones curiously cut with the finest and most exquisite art, but these stones out of the bottom of the river were more natural and more apt indications of the miracle: let posterity know by this that Jordan was driven back, for these very stones were then fetched out of it. In the institution of signs, God always chose that which was most proper and significant, rather than that which is pompous or curious; for God hath chosen the foolish things of the world. These twelve men, after they got over Jordan, must be sent back to the place where the ark stood, being permitted to come near it, which others might not, for this service; Pass over before the ark, ver. 5. i. e. into presence of the ark, which now stands in the midst of Jordan, and thence fetch these stones. (4.) The use of these stones is here appointed for a sign, ver. 6. a memorial, ver. 7. They would give occasion to the children to ask their parents in time to come, how these stones came thither? probably the land about not being stony; and then the parents would inform them; as they themselves had been informed, that in this place Jordan was divided by the almighty power of God, to give Israel passage into Canaan, as Joshua enlargeth on this head, ver. 22, &c.

2. According to these orders the thing was done.

1. Twelve stones were taken up out of the midst of Jordan, and carried in the sight of the people to the place where they had their head-quarters that night, ver. 4. It is probable the stones they took were as big as they could well carry, and as near as might be of a size and shape. But whether they went away with them immediately to the place, or whether they staid to attend the ark, and kept pace with the solemn procession of that, to grace its triumphant entry into Canaan, is not certain. By these stones which they were ordered to take up, God did as it were give them livery and soisin of this good land, it is all their own, let them enter and take possession; therefore what these twelve did, the children of Israel are said to do, ver. 8. because they were the representatives of their respective tribes. In allusion to this we may observe, that the Lord Jesus, our Joshua, when having overcome the sharpness of death and died up that Jordan, he had opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, he appointed his twelve apostles according to the number of the tribes of Israel, by the memorial of the gospel to transmit the knowledge of this to remote places and future ages.

2. Other twelve stones (probably much larger than the other, for we read not that they were each of them one man's load) were set up in the midst of Jordan, ver. 9. piled up so high in a heap or pillar, as that the top of it might be seen above water, when the river was low, or seen in the water, when it was clear, or at least the noise or commotion of the water passing over it would be observable, and the bargemen would avoid it, as they do a rock; some way or other, it is likely, it was discernable, so as to notify the very place where the ark stood, and to serve for a duplicate to the other monument which was to be set up on dry land in Gilgal, for the confirming its testimony, and the preserving of its tradition. The sign being doubled, no doubt the thing was certain.

10. ¶ For the priests which bear the ark stood in the midst of Jordan, until every thing was finished that the LORD commanded Joshua to speak unto the people, according to all that Moses commanded Joshua: and the people hastened and passed over. 11. And it came to pass when all the people were clean passed over, that the ark of the LORD passed over, and the priests in the presence of the people. 12. And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, passed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses spake unto them: 13. About forty thousand, prepared for war, passed over before the LORD unto battle, to the plains of Jericho. 14. ¶ On that day the LORD magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life. 15. And the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying, 16. Command the priests that bear the ark of the testimony, that they come up out of Jordan. 17. Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, Come ye up out of Jordan. 18. And it came to pass when the priests that bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before. 19. ¶ And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal in the east border of Jericho.

The inspired historian seems to be so well pleased with his subject here, that he is loth to go off it, and is therefore very particular in his narrative, especially in observing how closely Joshua pursued the orders God gave him, that he did nothing without divine direction, finishing all that the Lord had commanded him, ver. 10. which is also said to be what Moses commanded. We read not of any particular commands that Moses gave Joshua about this matter, the thing was altogether new to him. It must therefore be understood of the general instructions Moses had given him to follow the divine conduct, to deliver that to the people which he had received of the Lord, and to take all occasions to mind them of their duty to God, as the best return for his favours to them: This which Moses, who was now dead and gone, had said to him, he had in mind at this time, and did accordingly. It is well for us to have the good instructions that have been given us ready to us, when we have occasion for them.

1. All the people hastened and passed over, ver. 10. Some understand it of the twelve men that carried the stones, but it seems rather to be meant of the body of the people; for though an account was giving of their passing over, ver. 1. yet here it is repeated for the sake of this circumstance, which was to be added, that they passed over in haste, either because Joshua by their officers ordered them to make haste, for it was to be but one day's work, and they must not leave a hoof behind; or, perhaps it was their own inclination

inclination that hastened them. (1.) Some hastened because they were not able to trust God, they were afraid the waters should return upon them, being conscious of guilt, and diffident of the divine power and goodness. (2.) Others because they were not willing to tempt God to continue the miracle longer than needs must, nor would they put the patience of the priests that bare the ark too much to the stretch by unnecessary delay. (3.) Others, because they were eager to be in Canaan, and would thus shew how much they longed after that pleasant land. (4.) Those that considered least, yet hastened because others did. *He that believeth doth not make haste to anticipate God's counsels, but doth make haste to attend them, Isa. xxviii. 16.*

2. The two tribes and a half led the van, *ver. 12, 13*: So they had promised when they had their lot given them on that side Jordan, *Numb. xxxii. 27*. And Joshua had lately minded them of their promise, *chap. i. 14*. It was fit they that had the first settlement should be the first in the encounter of difficulties, the rather because they had not the incumbrance of families with them as the other tribes had, and they were all chosen men, and fit for service, ready armed. It was a good providence that they had so strong a body to lead them on, and would be an encouragement to the rest. And the two tribes had no reason to complain, the post of danger is the post of honour.

3. When all the people had got clear to the other side, the priests with the ark came up out of Jordan. This one would think should have been done of course, their own reason would tell them, that now there was no more occasion for them, and yet they did not stir a step till Joshua ordered them to move, and Joshua did not order them out of Jordan till God directed him to do so, *ver. 15, 16, 17*. So observant were they of Joshua, and he of God, which was their praise, as it was their happiness to be under so good a conduct. How low a condition soever God may at any time bring his priests or people to, let them patiently wait, till by his providence he shall call them up out of it, as the priests here were called to come up out of Jordan, and let them not be weary of waiting, while they have the tokens of God's presence with them, even the ark of the covenant in the depth of their adversity.

4. As soon as ever the priests, and the ark were come up out of Jordan, the waters of the river which had stood on a heap, gradually flowed down according to their nature and usual course, and soon filled the channel again, *ver. 18*. This makes it yet more evident, that the stop that had now been given to the river, was not from any secret natural cause; but purely from the power of God's presence, and for the sake of his Israel, for when Israel's turn was served, and the token of his presence was removed, immediately the water went forward again; so that if it be asked, *What ailed thee, O Jordan, that thou wast driven back?* It must be answered, it was purely in obedience to the God of Israel, and in kindness to the Israel of God: there is therefore none like unto the God of Jeshurun; happy also art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee O people? Some observe here by way of allusion, that when the ark and the priests that bare it are removed from any place, the flood-gates are drawn up, the defence is departed, and an inundation of judgments is to be expected presently. Those that are unchurched will soon be undone. The glory is departed if the ark be taken.

5. Notice is taken of the honour put upon Joshua by all this, *ver. 14*. On that day the Lord magnified Joshua, both by the fellowship he admitted him to with himself, speaking to him upon all occasions, and being ready to be consulted by him: and by the authority he confirmed him in, over both priests and people. Those that honour God he will honour, and when he will magnify a man, as he had said he would magnify Joshua, (*chap. iii. 7*.) he will do it effectually. Yet it was not for Joshua's sake only that he was thus magnified, but to put him in a capacity of doing so much the more service to Israel, for hereupon they feared him as they feared Moses. See here what is the best and surest way to command the respects of inferiors, and to gain their reverence and observance, not by blustering and threatening, and carrying it with a high hand, but by holiness and love, and all possible indications of a constant regard to their welfare, and to God's will and honour. Those are feared in the best manner, and to the best purpose, who make it to appear that God is with them, and that they set him before them. Those that are sanctified, are truly magnified, and are worthy of double honour. Favourites of heaven should be looked on with awe.

6. An account is kept of the time of this great event, *ver. 19*. it was on the tenth day of the first month, just forty years since they came out of Egypt, wanting five days. God had said in his wrath that they should wander forty years in the wilderness, but to make up that forty, was taken in the first year, which was then past, and had been a year of triumph in their deliverance out of Egypt, and this last, which had been a year of triumph likewise on the other side Jordan, so that all the forty were not years of sorrow; and at last he brought them into Canaan five days before the forty years were ended, to shew how little pleasure God takes in punishing, how swift he is to shew mercy, and that for the elect's sake the days of trouble are shortened, *Matth. xxiv. 22*. God ordered it so that they should enter Canaan four days before the annual solemnity of the passover, and on the very day when the preparation for it was to begin, *Exod. xii. 3*: because he would have their entrance into Canaan graced and sanctified with that religious feast, and would have them then to be minded of their deliverance out of Egypt, that comparing them together, God might be glorified as the alpha and omega of their bliss.

20. ¶ And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal. 21. And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? 22. Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. 23. For the LORD your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red-sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over: 24. That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever.

The twelve stones which were laid down in Gilgal, *ver. 8*. are here set up either one upon another, yet so as that they might be distinctly counted, or one by another in rows; for after they were fixed, they are not called a heap of stones, but these stones.

1. It is here supposed that posterity would enquire into the meaning of them, supposing them intended for a memorial. Your children shall ask their fathers, (for whom else should they ask?) What mean these stones? Note, Those that will be wise when they are old, must be inquisitive when they

are young. Our Lord Jesus, though he had in himself the fulness of knowledge, has by his example taught children and young people to hear and ask questions, *Luke ii. 45*. Perhaps when John was baptizing in Jordan at Bethabara, (the house of passage where the people passed over) he pointed at these very stones when he said, *Matth. iii. 9*. God is able of these stones (which were at first set up by the twelve tribes) to raise up children unto Abraham. These stones being the memorials of the miracles, the children's question gave occasion for the improvement of it; but our Saviour saith, *Luke xiv. 40*. If the children should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out; for one way or other the Lord will be glorified in his works of wonder.

2. The parents are here directed what answer to give to this enquiry, *ver. 22*. Ye shall let your children know that which you have yourselves learned from the written word and from your fathers. Note, It is the duty of parents to acquaint their children betimes with the word and works of God, that they may be trained up in the way they should go.

1. They must let their children know that Jordan was driven back before Israel, who went through it upon dry land, and this is the very place where they passed over. They saw how deep and strong a stream Jordan now was, but the divine power put a stop to it, even then when it overflowed all its banks, and this for you that live so long after. Note, God's mercies to our ancestors were mercies to us. And we should take all occasions to revive the remembrance of the great things God did for our fathers in the days of old. The place thus marked would be a memorandum to them; Israel came over this Jordan: a local memory would be of use to them, and the sight of the place remind them of that which was done there; and not only the inhabitants of the country, but strangers and travellers would look upon these stones and receive instruction. Many upon the sight of the stones would go to their bibles, and there read the history of this wonderful work, and some perhaps upon reading the history, though living at a distance, would have the curiosity to go and see the stones.

2. They must take that occasion to tell their children of the drying up of the Red-sea forty years before, as the Lord your God did to the Red-sea. Note, 1. It greatly magnifies later mercies to compare them with the former mercies, for by making the comparison it appears that God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. 2. Later mercies should bring to remembrance former mercies, and revive our thankfulness for them.

3. They must put them in the way of making a good use of these works of wonder, the knowledge whereof was thus carefully transmitted to them, *ver. 24*. (1.) The power of God was hereby magnified. All the world was, or might be convinced, that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that nothing is too hard for God to do: nor can any power, no not that of nature itself, obstruct what God will effect. The deliverances of God's people are instructions to all people, and fair warnings not to contend with Omnipotence. (2.) The people of God were engaged and encouraged to persevere in his service; That ye might fear the Lord your God, and consequently do your duty to him, and this for ever; or all days, *Mag.* every day, all the days of your lives, and your seed throughout your generations. The remembrance of this wonderful work should effectually restrain them from the worship of other gods, and constrain them to abide and labour in the service of their own God. Note, In all the instructions and informations parents give their children, they should have this chiefly in their eye, to teach and engage them to fear God for ever. Serious godliness is the best learning.

C H A P. V.

Israel is now got over Jordan, and the waters which had opened before them to favour their march forwards, are closed again behind them to forbid their retreat backward; they have now got footing in Canaan, and must apply themselves to the conquest of it; in order to which this chapter tells us, (1.) How their enemies were dispirited, *ver. 1*. (2.) What was done at their first landing to stiffen and encourage them. 1. The covenant of circumcision was renewed, *ver. 2—9*. 2. The feast of the passover was celebrated, *ver. 10*. 3. Their camp was victualled with the corn of the land, whereupon the manna ceased, *ver. 11, 12*. 4. The captain of the Lord's host himself appeared to Joshua to animate and direct him, *ver. 13—15*.

1. **A**ND it came to pass when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan west ward, and all the kings of the Canaanites which were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted; neither was their spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel. 2. ¶ At that time the LORD said unto Joshua, make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time. 3. And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the fore-skins. 4. And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: All the people that came out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way; after they came out of Egypt. 5. Now all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way, as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised. 6. For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD, unto whom the LORD swore that he would not shew them the land which the LORD swore unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey. 7. And their children, whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way. 8. And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole. 9. And the LORD said unto

unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from before you: wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.

A mighty shew no doubt the numerous camp of Israel made in the plains of Jericho, where now they had pitched their tents: *Who can count the dust of Jacob?* That which had long been the church in the wilderness, is now come up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved, and looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners; how terrible she was in the eyes of her enemies, we are here told, *ver. 1.* how fair and clear she was made in the eyes of her friends, by the rolling away of the reproach of Egypt, we are told in the following verses.

1. Here is the fright which the Canaanites were put into by their miraculous passing over Jordan, *ver. 1.* The news of it was soon dispersed all the country over, not only as a prodigy in itself, but as an alarm to all the kings and kingdoms of Canaan. *[Now, as when Babylon was taken: One post runs to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to carry the amazing tidings to every corner of their land, Jer. li. 31.]* And here we are told what impressions the tidings made upon the kings of this land, *their hearts melted like wax before the fire, neither was their spirit in them any more.* This intimates that though the heart of the people generally had fainted before as Rahab owned, *chap. ii. 9.* yet the kings had till now kept up their spirits pretty well, had promised themselves that being in possession, their country populous, and their cities fortified, they should be able to make their part good against the invaders; but when they heard not only that they were come over Jordan, and that that defence of their country was broken through, but that they were come over by a miracle, the God of nature manifestly fighting for them, *their hearts failed them too,* they gave up the cause for gone, and were now at their wits end. And, (1.) They had reason enough to be afraid, Israel itself was a formidable body; and much more so when God was its head; a God of almighty power. What can make head against them, if Jordan be driven back before them? (2.) God impressed these fears upon them; and dispirited them, as he had promised, *Exod. xxiii. 27. I will send my fear before thee.* God can make the wicked to fear where no fear is, *Psal. liii. 5.* much more where there is such cause for fear as was here. He that made the soul, can when he pleaseth make his sword thus to approach to it and kill it with his terrors.

2. The opportunity which this gave to the Israelites to circumcise those among them that were uncircumcised, *at that time, (ver. 2.)* when the country about them was in that great consternation, God ordered Joshua to circumcise the children of Israel, for at that time it might be done with safety even in an enemy's country; their hearts being melted, their hands were tied, that they could not take this advantage against them as Simeon and Levi did against the Shechemites, to come upon them when they were fore. Joshua could not be sure of this, and therefore if he had ordered this general circumcision just at this time of his own head, he might justly have been censured as imprudent, for how good soever the thing was in itself, in the eye of reason it was not seasonable at this time, and might have been of dangerous consequence; but when God commanded him to do it, he must not consult with flesh and blood: he that bid them do it no doubt would protect and bear them out in it. Now observe,

1. The occasion there was for this general circumcision. (1.) All that came out of Egypt were circumcised, *ver. 5.* While they had peace in Egypt, doubtless they circumcised their children the eighth day according to the law. But after they began to be oppressed, especially when the edict was made for the destruction of the male infants, the administration of this ordinance was interrupted: many of them were uncircumcised, of whom there was a general circumcision, either during the time of the three days darkness, as Dr. Lightfoot conjectures, or a year after, just before their eating the second passover at mount Sinai, and in order to that solemnity *Numb. ix. 2.* as many think. And it is with reference to that general circumcision, that this here is called a second, *ver. 2.* But the learned Masius thinks it refers to the general circumcision of Abraham's family when that ordinance was first instituted, *Gen. xvii. 23.* That first confirmed the promise of the land of Canaan, this second was a thankful celebration of the performance of that promise. But, (2.) all that were born in the wilderness, *viz.* after their walking in the wilderness, became by the divine sentence a judgment upon them for their disobedience, as it is intimated by that repetition of the sentence, *ver. 6.* All that were born since that fatal day that God swore in his wrath that none of that generation should enter into his rest, were uncircumcised.

But what shall we say to this? had not God enjoined it to Abraham under a very severe penalty, that every man-child of his seed should be circumcised on the eighth day? *Gen. xvii. 9-14.* Was it not the seal of the everlasting covenant? Was not so great a stress laid upon it then when they were coming out of Egypt, that when immediately after the first passover the law concerning the feast was made perpetual, this was one clause of it, that no uncircumcised person should eat of it, but should be deemed as a stranger? And yet under the government of Moses himself, to have all their children that were born for thirty-eight years together left uncircumcised, is unaccountable. So great an omission could not be general but by divine direction.

Now, 1. Some think circumcision was omitted because it was needless: it was appointed to be a mark of distinction between the Israelites and other nations, and therefore in the wilderness, where they were so perfectly separated from all and mingled with none, there was no occasion for it. 2. Others think they did not look upon the precept of circumcision as obliging them till they came to settle in Canaan, for in the covenant made with them at mount Sinai nothing was said about circumcision, neither was it of Moses but of the fathers, *John vii. 22.* and with particular reference to the grant of the land of Canaan, *Gen. xvii. 8.* 3. Others think God favourably dispensed with the omission of this ordinance, in consideration of the unsettledness of their state, and their frequent removes while they were in the wilderness. It was requisite that children after they were circumcised should rest for some time while they were sore, and stirring them might be dangerous to them; God therefore would have mercy and not sacrifice. This reason is general acquiesced in, but to me it is not satisfactory, for sometimes they stayed a year in a place, *Numb. ix. 22.* if not much longer, and in their removes the little children though sore might be wrapt so warm, and carried so easy as to receive no damage, and might certainly be much better accommodated than the mothers in travail or lying in. Therefore, 4. To me, it, seems to have been a continued token of God's displeasure against them for their unbelieving and murmuring. Circumcision was originally a seal of the promise of the land of Canaan, as we observed before. It was the believing in hope of that good land that the patriarchs circumcised their children: but when God had sworn in his wrath, concerning the men of war which came out of Egypt, that they should be consumed in the wilderness, and never enter Canaan, nor come within sight of it (as that sentence is here repeated, *ver. 6.* relation being thereunto had) as a farther ratification of that sentence, and to be a constant memorandum of it to them,

all that fell under that sentence, and were to fall by it, were forbidden to circumcise their children; by which they were plainly told, that whatever others might, they should never have the benefit of that promise which circumcision was the seal of. And this was such a significant indignation of God's wrath, as the breaking of the tables of the covenant was when Israel had broken the covenant by making the golden calf. It is true there is no express mention of this judicial prohibition in the account of that sentence; but an intimation of it, *Numb. xiv. 33. Your children shall bear your whoredoms.* It is probable the children of Caleb and Joshua were circumcised, for they were excepted out of that sentence, and of Caleb it is particularly said, *to him will I give the land and to his children,* *Deut. i. 39.* which was the very promise that circumcision was the seal of; and Joshua is here bid to circumcise the people, not his own family. Whatever the reason was, it seems this great ordinance was intermitted in Israel for almost forty years together, which is a plain indication that it was not of absolute necessity, nor was it to be of perpetual obligation, but should in the fulness of time be abolished, as now it was for so long a time suspended.

2. The orders given to Joshua for this general circumcision, *ver. 2. Circumcise again the children of Israel,* not the same persons, but the body of the people. Why was this ordered to be done now? *Ans.* (1.) Because now the promise which circumcision was instituted to be the seal of was performed. The seed of Israel was brought safe into the land of Canaan, let them therefore hereby own the truth of that promise which their fathers had disbelieved, and could not find in their hearts to trust to. (2.) Because now the threatening, which the suspending of circumcision for thirty-eight years was the ratification of, was fully executed by the expiring of the forty years. *That warfare is accomplished, that iniquity is pardoned,* (*Isa. xl. 2.*) and therefore now the seal of the covenant is revived again. But why was it not done sooner? why not while they were resting some months in the plains of Moab? why not during the thirty days of their mourning for Moses? or, why was it not deferred longer till they had made some progress in the conquest of Canaan, and had gained a settlement there? or at least till they had entrenched themselves, and fortified their camp? why must it be done the very next day after they were come over Jordan? *Ans.* Because divine wisdom saw that to be the fittest time, just when the forty years were ended, and they were entered Canaan; and the reasons which human wisdom would have offered against it were easily over-ruled. (1.) God would hereby shew that the camp of Israel was not governed by the ordinary rules and measures of war, but by immediate direction from God, who by thus exposing them, in the most dangerous moments, magnified his own power in protecting them, even them. And this great instance of security, in disabling themselves for action just then when they were entering upon action, proclaimed such a confidence in the divine care for their safety, as would increase their enemies fears; much more when their scouts informed them not only of the thing itself that was done, but of the meaning of it; that it was a seal of the grant of this land to Israel. (2.) God would hereby animate his people Israel against the difficulties they were now to encounter, by confirming his covenant with them, which gave them unquestionable assurance of victory and success, and the full possession of the land of promise. (3.) God would hereby teach them, and us with them, in all great undertakings to begin with God, to make sure of his favour by offering ourselves to him a living sacrifice, (for that was signified by the blood of circumcision) and then we may expect to prosper in all we do. (4.) The reviving of circumcision after it had been so long disused, was designed to revive the observation of other institutions, the omission of which had been connived at in the wilderness. This command to circumcise them was to mind them of that which Moses had told them, *Deut. xi. 8.* that when they were come over Jordan they must not do as they had done in the wilderness, but must come under a strict discipline. It was said concerning many of the laws God had given them, that they must observe them in the land to which they were going, *Deut. vi. 1-xii. 1.* (5.) This second circumcision, as it is here called, was typical of the spiritual circumcision with which the Israel of God when they entered into the gospel rest are circumcised: it is the learned Bishop Pierfon's observation, That this circumcision being performed under the conduct of Joshua, Moses's successor, it speaks our Jesus to be the true circumcision, the author of another circumcision than that of the flesh, commanded by the law, even the circumcision of the heart, *Rom. ii. 29.* called the circumcision of Christ, *Col. ii. 11.*

3. The people's obedience to these orders. Joshua circumcised the children of Israel, *ver. 3.* not himself with his own hands, but he commanded that it should be done, and took care that it was done; it might be soon dispatched, for it was not necessary that it should be done by a priest or Levite, but any one might be employed to do it. All those that were under twenty years old when the people were numbered at mount Sinai, and not being numbered with them, fell not by the fatal sentence, were circumcised, and by them all the rest might be circumcised in a little time. The people had promised to hearken to Joshua, as they had hearkened to Moses, *chap. i. 17.* and here they gave an instance of their obsequiousness, that they submitted to this painful institution, and did not for the sake of it call him a bloody governor, as Zipporah because of the circumcision called Moses a bloody husband.

Lastly, The names given to the place where this was done, to perpetuate the memory of it. (1.) It was called the hill of the foreskins, *ver. 3.* Probably, the foreskins that were cut off were laid on a heap, and covered with earth, so that they made a little hillock. (2.) It was called Gilgal, from a word which signifies to take away, or devolve, from that which God said to Joshua, *ver. 9. This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt.* God is jealous for the honour of his people, his own honour being so much interested in it; and whatever reproach they may lie under for a time, first or last it will certainly be rolled away, and every tongue that riseth up against him he will condemn. (1.) Their circumcision rolled away the reproach of Egypt. They were hereby owned to be the free born children of God, having the seal of the covenant in their flesh, and so the reproach of their bondage in Egypt was removed. They were tainted with the idolatry of Egypt, and that was their reproach; but now they were circumcised, it was to be hoped they would be so entirely devoted to God, that the reproach of their affection to Egypt would be rolled away. (2.) Their coming safe to Canaan rolled away the reproach of Egypt, for it silenced that pitiful suggestion of the Egyptians, that for mischief they were brought out, the wilderness had shut them in, *Exod. xiv. 3.* their wandering so long in the wilderness confirmed the reproach, but now they were entered into Canaan in triumph, that reproach was done away. When God glorifies himself in perfecting the salvation of his people, he not only silenceth the reproach of their enemies, but rolls it upon themselves.

10. ¶ And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho. 11. And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the self-

self-same day. 12. ¶ And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

We may well imagine what a gaze the country was at; and when they observed the motions of the enemy could not but think them very strange. When soldiers take the field, they are apt to think themselves excused from religious exercises, they have not time nor thought to attend them; yet Joshua opens the campaign with one act of devotion after another. What was afterwards said to another Joshua might truly be said to this, *Hear now, O Joshua, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee are men wondered at*, Zech. iii. 8. and yet indeed he took the right method. This is likely to end well, that begins with God.

Here is, (1.) A solemn passover kept, at the time appointed by the law, the fourteenth day of the first month, and in the same place where they were circumcised, ver. 10. While they were wandering in the wilderness, they were denied the benefit and comfort of this ordinance, as a farther token of God's displeasure; but now, in answer to the prayer of Moses upon the passing of that sentence, *Psal. xc. 15. God comforted them again*, after the time that he had afflicted them, and therefore now that joyful ordinance is revived again. Now they are entered into Canaan, it is very seasonable to remember those wondrous works of divine power and goodness by which they were brought out of Egypt. The finishing of mercies should bring to mind the beginning of them; and when it is perfect day, we must not forget how welcome the morning light was, when we had long waited for it. The solemn passover followed immediately after the solemn circumcision; thus, when they that received the word were baptized, immediately we find them *breaking of bread*; Acts ii. 41, 42. They kept this passover in the plains of Jericho, as it were in defiance of the Canaanites that were round about them and enraged against them, and yet could not give them any disturbance: Thus God gave them an early instance of the performance of that promise, that when they went up to keep the feasts their land should be taken under the special protection of the divine providence, *Exod. xxxiv. 24. Neither shall any man desire thy land. He now prepared a table before them in the presence of their enemies*, *Psal. xlii. 5.*

2 Provisions made for their camp of the corn of the land, and the ceasing of the manna thereupon, ver. 11, 12. Manna was a wonderful mercy to them when they needed it; but it was a mark of a wilderness state, it was the food of children, and therefore, though it was angels food, and not to be complained of as light bread, yet it would be more acceptable to them to eat of the corn of the land, and that they are now furnished with; the country people being retired for safety into Jericho, left their barns and fields, and all that was in them, which served for the subsistence of this great army. And the supply came very seasonably, for, (1.) After the passover they were to keep the feast of unleavened bread, which they could not do according to the appointment, when they had nothing but manna to live upon (and perhaps that was one reason why it was intermitted in the wilderness.) But now they found old corn enough in the barns of the Canaanites to supply them plentifully for that occasion; thus *the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just*, and little did those who lay it up think, *whose all these things should be which they had provided*. (2.) On the morrow after the passover-sabbath they were to wave the sheaf of first-fruits before the Lord, *Lev. xxiii. 10, 11.* And this they were particularly ordered to do, when they were come into the land which God would give them: and they were furnished for this with the fruit of the land that year, ver. 12. which was then growing and beginning to be ripe: Thus they were well provided for, both with old and new corn, as good householders, *Matth. xiii. 52.* And as soon as ever the fruits of this good land came to their hands, they had an opportunity of honouring God with them; and employing them in his service according to his appointment. And thus, *behold all things were clean and comfortable to them*. Calvin is of opinion, that they had kept the passover every year in its season during their wandering in the wilderness, though it be not mentioned, and that God dispensed with their being uncircumcised, as he did notwithstanding that admit them to offer other sacrifices: But some gather from *Amos v. 25.* that after the sentence passed upon them, there were no sacrifices offered till they came to Canaan, and consequently no passover kept. And it is observable, that after that sentence, *Numb. xiv.* the law that follows, *chap. xv.* concerning sacrifices, begins, ver. 1. *When ye shall come into the land of their habitations, you shall do so and so.*

Notice is taken of the ceasing of the manna as soon as ever they had eaten the old corn of the land; (1.) To shew that it did not come by chance or common providence, as snow or hail doth, but by the special designation of divine wisdom and goodness; for as it came just when they needed it, so it continued as long as they had occasion for it and no longer. (2.) To teach us not to expect extraordinary supplies, when they may be had in an ordinary way. If God had dealt with Israel, according to their deserts, the manna had ceased then when they called it light bread, but as long as they needed it, God continued it, though they despised it; and now they needed it not, God withdrew it, though perhaps some of them desired it. He is a wise father that knows the necessities of his children, and accommodates his gifts to them, not to their humours. The word and ordinances of God are spiritual manna, with which God nourisheth his people in this wilderness; and though often forfeited, yet they are continued while we are here; but when we come to the heavenly Canaan, this manna will cease, for we shall have no longer need of it.

13. ¶ And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, *Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?* 14. And he said, *Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come.* And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, *What saith my LORD unto his servant?* 15. And the captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, *Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy:* and Joshua did so.

We have hitherto found God often speaking to Joshua, but we read not till now of any appearance of God's glory to him; now his difficulties increased, his encouragements were increased in proportion. Observe,

1. The time when he was favoured with this vision, it was immediately. No. XXXII.

after he had performed the great solemnities of circumcision and the passover; then God made himself known to him: Note, We may then expect the discoveries of the divine grace, when we are found in the way of our duty, and are diligent and sincere in our attendance on holy ordinances.

2. The place where he had this vision, it was by Jericho,—in Jericho, so the word is, in it by faith and hope, though as yet he had not begun to lay siege to it; in it in thought and expectation, or in the fields of Jericho, hard by the city; there, it should seem, he was all alone, fearless of danger, because sure of the divine protection. There he was (some think) meditating and praying, and to those who are so employed, God often graciously manifests himself. Or, perhaps, there he was to take a view of the city, to observe its fortifications, and contrive how to attack it, and perhaps he was at a loss within himself how to make his approaches, when God came and directed him. Note, God will help those that help themselves; *vigilantibus non dormientibus succurrit lex*. Joshua was in his post, as a general, when God came and made himself known to him as a generalissimo.

3. The appearance itself. Joshua, as is usual with those that are full of thought and care, was looking downwards, his eyes fixed on the ground, when of a sudden he was surprized with the appearance of a man, who stood before him at some little distance, which obliged him to lift up his eyes, and gave a diversion to his musings, ver. 13. he appeared to him as a man, but a considerable man, and one fit to be taken notice of. Now, (1.) We have reason to think that this man was the Son of God, the eternal Word, who, before he assumed the human nature for good and all, frequently appeared in a human shape. So Bishop Patrick thinks consonant to the judgment of the Fathers. Joshua gave him divine honours, and he received them, which a created angel would not have done, and he is called *Jehovah*, *chap. vi. 2.* (2.) He here appeared as a soldier, with his sword drawn in his hand. To Abraham in his tent he appeared as a traveller: to Joshua in the field, as a man of war; Christ will be to his people what their faith expects and desires. Christ had his sword drawn, which served, (1.) To justify the war Joshua was engaged in, and to shew him that it was of God, who gave him commission to kill and slay. If the sovereign draw the sword, that proclaims war, and authorizeth the subject to do so too. The sword is then well drawn when Christ draws it, and give the banner to them that fear him, to be displayed because of the truth, *Psal. lx. 4.* (2.) To encourage him to carry it on with vigour; for Christ's sword drawn in his hand notes how ready he is for the defence and salvation of his people, who through him shall do valiantly. His sword turns every way.

4. The bold question with which Joshua accosted him. He did not send a servant, but went up to him himself, and asked, *Art thou for us or for our adversaries?* Which intimates his readiness to entertain him if he were for them, and to fight him if he were against them. This speaks, (1.) His great courage and resolution. He was not ruffled by the suddenness of the appearance, nor daunted with the majesty and bravery, which no doubt appeared in the countenance of the person he saw, but, with a presence of mind that became so great a general, put this fair question to him. God had bid Joshua to be courageous, and by this it appears that he was so, for what God by his word requires in his people, he doth by his grace work in them. (2.) His great concern for the people and their cause: so heartily has he embarked in the interests of Israel, that none shall stand by him with the face of a man, but he will know whether he be a friend or a foe. It should seem he expected him for an enemy, a Goliath that was come to destroy the army of the living God, and to give him a challenge. Thus apt are we to look upon that as against us which is most for us. The question plainly implies, that the cause between the Israelites and Canaanites, between Christ and Beelzebub, will not admit of a neutrality. *He that is not with us is against us.*

5. The account he gave of himself, ver. 14. nay, not for your adversaries, you may be sure, but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come, not only for you as a friend, but over you as commander in chief. Here was now, as of old, *Gen. xxxii. 2. Mahanaim, two hosts*, an host of Israelites ready to engage the Canaanites, and an host of angels to protect them therein, and he, as captain of both, conducts the host of Israel, and commands the host of angels to their assistance. Perhaps, in allusion to this, Christ is called the captain of our salvation, *Heb. ii. 10.* and a leader and commander to the people, *Isa. lv. 4.* They cannot but be victorious that have such a captain. He now came as captain to review the troops, to animate them, and to give the necessary orders for the besieging of Jericho.

6. The great respect Joshua paid him when he understood who he was; it is probable not only by what he said, but by some other sensible indications, he perceived that he was a divine person and not a man.

1. Joshua paid homage to him. He fell on his face to the earth, and did worship. Joshua was himself general of the forces of Israel, and yet he was far from looking with jealousy upon this stranger, who produced a commission for captain of the Lord's host above him; he did not offer to dispute his claim, but cheerfully submitted to him as his commander. It will become the greatest of men to be humble and reverent in their addresses to God.

2. He begged to receive commands and directions from him. *What saith my Lord unto his servant?* His former question was bold and soldier-like, but this was pious and saint-like; nor was any disparagement to the greatness of Joshua's spirit, thus to humble himself when he had to do with God: even crowned heads cannot bow too low before the throne of the Lord Jesus, who is King of kings; *Psal. ii. 10, 11.—lxxii. 10, 11.* Observe, 1. The relation he owns between himself and Christ; that Christ was his Lord, and himself his servant and under his command, Christ his captain, and himself a soldier under him; to do as he is bidden, *Matth. viii. 9.* Note, The foundation of all acceptable obedience is laid in a sincere dedication of ourselves, as servants to Jesus Christ as our Lord, *Psal. xvi. 2.* 2. The enquiry he makes pursuant to this relation, *What saith my Lord?* Which implies an earnest desire to know the will of Christ, and a cheerful readiness and resolution to do it. Joshua owns himself an inferior officer, and stands to receive orders; this temper of mind shews him fit for the post he was in, for those know best how to command that know how to obey.

7. The farther expressions of reverence which this divine captain required from Joshua, ver. 15. *Loose thy shoe from off thy foot*, in token of the reverence and respect, which with us is signified by uncovering the head, and as an acknowledgment of a divine presence, which, while it continued there, did in a manner sanctify the place and dignify it. We use to say of a person we have a great affection for, that we love the very ground he goes upon; thus Joshua must shew his reverence for this divine person, he must not tread the ground he stood on with his dirty shoes, *Eccl. v. 1.* Outward expressions of inward reverence, and a religious awe of God, well become us, and are required of us, whenever we approach to him in solemn ordinances. Bishop Patrick well observes here, that the very same orders God gave to Moses at the bush, when he was sending him to bring Israel out of Egypt, *Exod. iii. 2, 3.* he here gives to Joshua, for the confirming of his faith in the promise he had lately given him, that as he had been with

Moses, so he would be with him, *chap. i. 5.* Had Moses such a presence of God with him, as when it became sensible, sanctified the ground? so had Joshua. And, (lastly) hereby he prepares him to receive the instructions he was about to give him, concerning the siege of Jericho, which this captain of the Lord's host was now come to give Israel possession of.

C H A P. VI.

Joshua opened the campaign with the siege of Jericho, a city which could not trust so much to the courage of its people, as to act offensively, and to send out its forces to oppose Israel's standing and encamping, but trusted so much to the strength of its walls, as to stand upon its defence, and not to surrender, or desire conditions of peace: Now here we have the story of the taking of it. 1. The directions and assurances which the captain of the Lord's host gave concerning it, ver. 1—5. 2. The trial of the people's patient obedience in walking round the city six days, ver. 6—14. 3. The wonderful delivery of it into their hands the seventh day, with a solemn charge to them to use it as a devoted thing, ver. 15—21. and ver. 24. 4. The preservation of Rahab and her relations, ver. 22, 23, 25. 5. A curse pronounced upon the man that should dare to rebuild this city, ver. 26, 27. An abstract of this story we find amongst the trophies of faith, Heb. xi. 30. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

1. NOW Jericho was straitly shut up, because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in. 2. And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour. 3. And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once: thus shalt thou do six days. 4. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. 5. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout: and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.

We have here a contest between God and the men of Jericho, and their different resolutions, upon which it is easy to say whose word shall prevail.

1. Jericho resolves Israel shall not be its master, *ver. 1.* It was straitly shut up, because of the children of Israel, it did shut up, and it was shut up. So it is in the margin, it did shut up itself, being strongly fortified both by art and nature, and it was shut up by the obstinacy and resolution of the inhabitants, who agreed never to surrender or so much as sound a parley; none went out as deserters, or to treat of peace, nor were any admitted in to offer peace. Thus were they insatuated, and their hearts hardened to their own destruction, the miserable case and character of all those that strengthen themselves against the Almighty, Job xv. 25.

2. God resolves Israel shall be its master, and that quickly. The captain of the Lord's host, here called Jehovah, taking notice how strongly Jericho was fortified, and how strictly guarded, and knowing Joshua's thoughts and care about reducing it, and perhaps his fears of a disgrace there, and of stumbling at the threshold, gave him here all the assurance he could desire of success, *ver. 2.* See, I have given into thine hand Jericho. Not I will do it, but I have done it; it is all thine own, as sure as if it were already in thy possession. It was designed that this city, being the first-fruits of Canaan, should be entirely devoted to God, and that neither Joshua nor Israel should ever be one mite the richer for it; and yet it is here said to be given into their hand, for we must reckon that most our own which we have an opportunity of honouring God with and employing in his service.

Now, 1. The captain of the Lord's host gives directions how the city should be besieged. No trenches are to be opened, no batteries erected, or battering-rams drawn up, nor any military preparations made, but the ark of God must be carried by the priests round the city, once a day for six days together, and seven times the seventh day, attended by the men of war in silence; but the priests all the while blowing with trumpets of rams-horns, *ver. 3, 4.* This was all they were to do.

2. He assures them, that on the seventh day before night, they should, without fail, be masters of the town; upon a signal given they must all shout, and immediately the wall should fall down, which would not only expose the inhabitants, but so dispirit them that they would not be able to make any resistance, *ver. 5.* God appointed this way, (1.) To magnify his own power, that he might be exalted in his own strength, Psal. xxi. 13. not in the strength of instruments. God would hereby yet farther make bare his own almighty arm for the encouragement of Israel, and the terror and confusion of the Canaanites. (2.) To put an honour upon his ark, the instituted token of his presence, and to give a reason for the laws, by which the people were obliged to look upon it with the most profound veneration and respect. When long after this the ark was brought into the camp without orders from God, it was looked upon as a profanation of it, and the people paid dear for their presumption, 1 Sam. iv. 3. But now it was done by the divine appointment, it was an honour to the ark of God, and a great encouragement to the faith of Israel. (3.) It was likewise to put honour upon the priests, who were appointed upon this occasion to carry the ark, and sound the trumpets. Ordinarily the priests were excused from war, that the privilege, with other honour and powers that the law had given them, might not be grudged them; in this service they are principally employed, and so the people are made sensible what blessings they were to the public, and how well worthy of all the advantages conferred upon them. (4.) It was to try their faith, and obedience, and patience of the people, to try whether they would observe a precept, which to human policy seemed foolish to obey, and believe a promise, which in human probability seemed impossible to be performed. They were also proved, whether they could patiently bear the reproaches of their enemies, and patiently wait for the salvation of the Lord. Thus by faith, not by force, the walls of Jericho fell down. (5.) It was to encourage the hope of Israel, with reference to the remaining difficulties that were before them. That suggestion of the evil spies, that Canaan could never be conquered, because

the cities were walled up to heaven, (Deut. i. 28.) would by this be forever silenced. The strongest and highest walls cannot hold out against Omnipotence; they need not fight, and therefore needed not fear, because God fought for them.

6. ¶ And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD. 7. And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the LORD. 8. ¶ And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns passed on before the LORD, and blew with the trumpets: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them. 9. ¶ And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the rereward came after the ark, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets. 10. And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout, then shall ye shout. 11. So the ark of the LORD compassed the city, going about it once: and they came into the camp, and lodged in the camp. 12. ¶ And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. 13. And seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD, went on continually, and blew with the trumpets: and the armed men went before them, but the rereward came after the ark of the LORD, the priests going on and blowing with the trumpets. 14. And the second day they compassed the city once, and returned into the camp: so they did six days. 15. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times. 16. And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout, for the LORD hath given you the city.

We have here an account of the cavalcade which Israel made about Jericho, the orders Joshua gave concerning it, as he had received them from the Lord, and their punctual observance of these orders. We do not find that he gave the people the express assurances God had given him, that he would deliver the city into their hands; but tried whether they would obey orders with a general confidence, that it would end well, and we find them very observant both of God and Joshua.

1. Wherever the ark went, the people attended it, *ver. 9.* The armed men went before it to clear the way, not thinking it any disparagement to them, though they were men of war, to be pioneers to the ark of God. If any inconvenience should be in crossing all the roads that led to the city, (which they must do in walking round it) they would remove it, if any opposition should be made by the enemy they would encounter it, that the priests march with the ark might be easy and safe. It is an honour to the greatest of men to do any good office to the ark, and to serve the interests of religion in their country: The rereward, either another body of armed men, or Dan's Squadron, which marched last through the wilderness, or (as some think) the multitude of the people who were not armed or disciplined for war (as many of them as would) followed the ark, to testify their respects to it, to grace the solemnity, and to be witnesses of what was done. Every faithful zealous Israelite would be willing to undergo the same fatigues and run the same hazard with the priests that bore the ark.

2. Seven priests went immediately before the ark, having trumpets in their hands, with which they were continually sounding, *ver. 4, 5, 9, 13.* The priests were God's ministers, and thus in his name, (1.) They proclaimed war with the Canaanites, and so struck a terror upon them, for by terrors upon their spirits they were to be conquered and subdued. Thus God's ministers, by the solemn declarations of his wrath against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, must blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in the holy mountain, that the sinners in Zion may be afraid. They are God's heralds to denounce war against all those that go on still in their trespasses, but say, they shall have peace though they go on. (2.) They proclaimed God's gracious presence with Israel, and so put life and courage into them. It was appointed, that when they went to war the priests should encourage them with the assurances of God's presence with them, *Deut. xx. 2, 3, 4.* And particularly their blowing with trumpets was to be a sign to the people that they should be remembered before the Lord their God in the day of battle, *Numb. x. 9.* It encouraged Abijah, 2 Chron. xiii. 12. Thus God's ministers, by sounding the jubilee trumpet of the everlasting gospel, which proclaims liberty and victory, must encourage the good soldiers of Jesus Christ in their spiritual warfare.

3. The trumpets they used were not those silver trumpets which were appointed to be made for ordinary service, but trumpets of rams horns, bored hollow for the purpose, as some think; these trumpets were of the basest matter, dullest sound, and least shew, that the excellency of the power might be of God. Thus by the foolishness of preaching, fitly compared to the sounding of these rams horns, the devil's kingdom is thrown down, and the weapons of our warfare, though they are not carnal, nor seem to a carnal eye likely to bring any thing to pass, yet they are mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. The word here is trumpets of Jubel, that is, such trumpets as they used to blow withal in the year of jubilee, so many interpreters understand it, as signifying the complete liberty to which Israel was now brought, and the bringing of the land of Canaan into the hands of its just and rightful owners.

4. All the people were commanded to be silent, not to speak a word, nor make any noise, *ver. 10.* that they might the more carefully attend to the sound of the sacred trumpets, which they were now to look upon as the voice

voice of God among them, and it doth not become us to speak when God is speaking. It likewise intimates their reverent expectation of the event, *Zech. ii. 13. Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord, Exod. xiv. 14. God shall fight, and you shall hold your peace.*

5. They were to do this once a day for six days together, and did so, and seven times the seventh day, *ver. 14.* God could have caused the walls of Jericho to fall upon the first surrounding them, but they must go round them thirteen times before they fall, that they might be kept waiting patiently for the Lord. Though they were newly come into Canaan, and their time was very precious, for they had a great deal of work before them, yet they must linger so many days about Jericho, seeming to do nothing, nor to make any progress in their business. As promised deliverances must be expected in God's way, so they must be expected in his time. *He that believes doth not make haste, not more haste than God would have him make. Go yet seven times before any thing hopeful appears, 1 Kings xviii. 43.*

6. One of these days must needs be a sabbath day, and the Jews say the last was so, but that is not certain; however if he that appointed them to rest on the sabbath-days, appointed them to walk on this, that was sufficient to justify them in it; he never intended to bind himself by his own laws, but that when he pleased he might dispense with them; the impotent man went upon this principle when he argued, *John v. 11. He that made me whole (and therefore has a divine power) he said unto me, take up thy bed.* And in this case here, it was an honour to the sabbath-day, by which our time is divided into weeks, that just seven days were to be spent in this work, and seven priests were employed to sound seven trumpets; that number being on this occasion, as well as many others, made remarkable in remembrance of the six days work of the creation, and the seventh day's rest from it. And, besides, the law of the sabbath forbids our own work, which is servile and secular, but this which they did was a religious act. It is certainly no breach of the sabbath rest, to do the sabbath work, for the sake of, which the rest was instituted, and what is the sabbath work but to attend the ark in all its motions?

7. They continue to do this, during the time appointed, and seven times the seventh day, though they saw not any effect of it, believing that *at the end the vision would speak and not lie, Hab. ii. 3.* If we persevere in the way of duty we shall lose nothing by it at long run. It is probable, they walked at such a distance from the walls as to be out of the reach of the enemies' arrows, and out of the hearing of their scoffs. We may suppose the oddness of the thing did at first amuse the besieged, but by the seventh day they were grown secure, feeling no harm from that, which perhaps they looked upon as an enchantment: Probably, they bantered the besiegers, as they, *Neh. iv. 2. What do these feeble Jews?* Is this the people we thought so formidable? Are these their methods of attack? Thus they cried peace and safety, that the destruction might be the more terrible when it came. *Wicked men (saith Bishop Hall) think God in jest when he is preparing for their judgment; but they will be convinced of their mistake when it is too late.*

8. At last they were to give a shout, and did so, and immediately the walls fell, *ver. 16.* This was a shout for mastery, a triumphant shout, the shout of a king is among them, *Numb. xxiii. 21.* This was a shout of faith, they believed that the walls of Jericho would fall, and by that faith they were thrown down. It was a shout of prayer, an echo to the sound of the trumpets which proclaimed the promise that God would remember them; with one accord, as one man they cry to heaven for help, and help comes in. Some allude to this to shew, that we must never expect a complete victory over our own corruption till the very evening of our last day, and then we shall shout in triumph over them, *when we come to the number and measure of our perfection, as Bishop Hall expresseth it, A good heart (saith he) groans under the sense of his infirmities, vain would be rid of them, and strives and prays, but when all is done, until the end of the seventh day it cannot be; then judgment shall be brought forth unto victory.* And at the end of time, when our Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the sound of the trumpet, Satan's kingdom shall be completely ruined, and not till then, when all opposing rule, principality and power, shall be effectually and eternally put down.

17. ¶ And the city shall be accursed, *even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD:* only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. 18. And ye in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. 19. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD. 20. So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city every man straight before him, and they took the city. 21. And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword. 22. But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her. 23. And the young men that were spies, went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had: and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel. 24. And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. 25. And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day: because she hid the messengers which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho. 26. ¶ And Joshua adjured them at the time, saying, Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born and

in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it. 27. So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame was noised throughout all the country.

The people had religiously observed the orders given them concerning the besieging of Jericho, and now at length Joshua had told them, *ver. 16. The Lord has given you the city, enter and take possession.* Accordingly in these verses we have,

1. The rules they were to observe in taking possession: God gives it them, and therefore may direct it to what uses and intents, and clog it with what provisos and limitations he thinks fit. It is given to them to be devoted to God, as perhaps the worst of all the cities of Canaan.

(1.) This city shall be burnt, and all the lives in it sacrificed without mercy in the justice of God. All this they knew was included in those words, *ver. 17.* The city shall be a *cherem*, a devoted thing, it and all therein, to the Lord; no life in it might be ranomed upon any terms, they must all be surely put to death, *Lev. xxvii. 29.* So he appoints, from whom as creatures they had received their lives, and to whom as sinners they had forfeited them, and who may dispute his sentence? *Is God unrighteous who thus taketh vengeance?* God forbid that we should entertain such a thought! There was more of God seen in taking Jericho, than of any other of the cities of Canaan, and therefore that must be more than any other devoted to him. And the severe usage of this city would strike a terror upon all the rest, and melt their hearts yet more before Israel. Only when this severity is ordered, Rahab and her family are excepted; *she shall live and all that are with her.* She had distinguished herself from her neighbours by the kindness she shewed to Israel, and therefore shall be distinguished from them by the speedy return of that kindness.

(2.) All the treasure of it, the money and plate and valuable goods must be consecrated to the service of the tabernacle, and brought into the stock of dedicated things: The Jews say, because the city was taken on the sabbath day. Thus God would be honoured by the beautifying and enriching of his tabernacle: Thus preparation was made for the extraordinary expenses of his service, and thus Israel was taught not to set their hearts upon worldly wealth, nor to aim at heaping up abundance of it for themselves. God had promised them a land *flowing with milk and honey*, not a land abounding with silver and gold, for he would have them live comfortably in it, that they might serve him cheerfully, but not covet either to trade with distant countries, or to hoard for after times. He would likewise have them reckon themselves enriched in the enriching of the tabernacle; and to think that which was laid up in God's house as truly their honour and wealth as if it had been laid up in their own.

A particular caution is given them to take heed of meddling with the forbidden spoil; for what was devoted to God, if they offered to appropriate it to their own use, would prove accursed to them; therefore, *ver. 18. in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing; you will find yourselves inclined to reach towards it, but check yourselves, frighten yourselves from having any thing to do with it.* He speaks as if he foresaw the sin of Achan, which we have an account of in the next chapter, when he gives that reason for the caution, lest ye make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it, as it proved Achan did.

2. The entrance that was opened them into the city by the sudden fall of the walls, or at least that part of the wall over-against which they then were when they gave the shout, *ver. 20. The wall fell down flat*, and probably killed abundance of people; the guards that stood sentinel upon it or others that crowded upon it, to look at the Israelites that were walking round: We read of thousands killed by the fall of a wall, *1 Kings xx. 30.* That which they trusted to for defence proved their destruction. The sudden fall of the wall, no doubt put the inhabitants into such a consternation, that they had no strength nor spirit to make any resistance, but they became an easy prey to the sword of Israel, and saw to how little purpose it was to shut their gates against a people that had the Lord on the head of them, *Mic. ii. 13.* Note, The God of heaven easily can, and certainly will break down all the opposing power of his and his Church's enemies. Gates of brass and bars of iron are before him but as *straw and rotten wood, Isa. i. 2. Who will bring me into the strong city? wilt not thou, O God?* *Psal. lx. 9, 10.* Thus shall Satan's kingdom fall, nor shall any prosper that harden themselves against God.

3. The execution of the orders given concerning the devoted city. 1. All that breathed were put to the sword: not only the men that were found in arms, but the women and children and old people. Though they cried quarter, and begged never to earnestly for their lives, there was no room for compassion, pity must be forgotten, they utterly destroyed all, *ver. 21.* If they had not a divine warrant under the seal of miracles for this execution, it could not have been justified, nor can it justify the like now, when we are sure no such warrant can be produced. But being appointed by the righteous judge of heaven and earth to do it, who is not unrighteous in taking vengeance, they are to be applauded in doing it as the faithful ministers of his justice. Work for God was then bloody work, and *curst was he that did it deceitfully, keeping back his sword from blood, Jer. xlviii. 10.* But the spirit of the gospel is very different, for Christ came not to destroy men's lives but to save them, *Luke ix. 56.* Christ's victories were of another nature. The cattle were put to death with the owners, as additional sacrifices to the divine justice: The cattle of the Israelites, when slain at the altar, were accepted as sacrifices for them, but the cattle of these Canaanites were required to be slain as sacrifices with them, for their iniquity was not to be purged with sacrifices and offering; both were for the glory of God. 2. The city was burnt with fire and all that was in it, *ver. 24.* The Israelites perhaps when they had taken Jericho, a large and well built city, hoped they would have that for their head-quarters: but God will have them yet to dwell in tents, and therefore fires this nest, lest they should nestle in it. 3. All the silver and gold, and all those vessels which were capable of being purified by fire, were brought into the treasury of the house of the Lord, not that he needed it, but he would be honoured by it, as the Lord of hosts, of their hosts in particular, the God that gives the victory, and therefore might demand the spoil; either the whole as here, or as sometimes a tenth, *Heb. vii. 4.*

4. The preservation of Rahab the harlot, or inn-keeper, who *perished not with them that believed not, Heb. xi. 31.* The public faith was engaged for her safety, by the two spies, who acted therein as public persons; and therefore, though the hurry they were in at the taking of the town, no doubt was very great, yet Joshua took effectual care for her preservation. The same persons that she had secured, were employed to secure her, *ver. 22, 23.* They were best able to do it who knew her and her house, and they were fittest to do it, that it might appear it was for the sake of her kindness to them, that she was thus distinguished, and had her life given her for a prey. All her kindred were saved with her; like Noah she believed to the saving of her house; and thus faith in Christ brings salvation to the house, *Acts xvi. 31.* Some ask, how her house which is said to have been upon the wall, *chap. ii. 15.* escaped falling with the wall: we are sure it did escape, for she and her relations were safe in it; either though it joined so

near to the wall as to be said to be upon it; yet it was so far off as not to fall either with the wall or under it, or rather that part of the wall on which her house stood fell not. Now being preserved alive, (1.) She was left for some time without the camp to be purified from her Gentile superstition, which she was to renounce, and to be prepared for her admission as a proselyte. (2.) She was in due time incorporated with the church of Israel, and she and her posterity dwelt in Israel, and her family was remarkable long after. We find her the wife of Salmon prince of Judah, mother of Boaz, and named among the ancestors of our Saviour, *Matt. i. 3.* Having received Israelites in the name of Israelites, she had an Israelite's reward. Bishop Pearson observes, that Joshua saved Rahab the harlot, and admitting her into Israel, was a figure of Christ's receiving and entertaining into his kingdom the publicans and the harlots, *Mat. xxi. 31.* Or it may be applied to the conversion of the Gentiles.

3. Jericho is condemned to a perpetual desolation, and a curse pronounced upon the man that at any time hereafter should offer to rebuild it, *ver. 26.* Joshua adjured them, i. e. the elders and people of Israel, not only by their own consent, obliging themselves and their posterity never to rebuild this city, but by the divine appointment; God himself having forbidden it under the severe penalty here annexed. (1.) God would hereby shew the weight of a divine curse; where it rests there is no contending with it, nor getting from under it; it brings ruin without remedy or repair. (2.) He would have it to remain in its ruins a standing monument of his wrath against the Canaanites, when the measure of their iniquity was full; of his mercy to his people, when the time was come for their settlement in Canaan. The desolations of their enemies were witnesses of his favour to them, and would upbraid them with their ingratitude to that God who had done so much for them. The situation of this city was very pleasant, and probably its nearness to Jordan was an advantage to it, which would tempt men to build upon the same spot, but they are here told it is at their peril if they do it. Men build for their posterity, but he that builds Jericho shall have no posterity to enjoy what he builds; his eldest son shall die when he begins the work, and if he take not warning by that stroke to desist, but will go on presumptuously, the finishing of that work shall be attended with the funeral of his youngest, and we must suppose all the rest cut off between. This curse not being a curse causeless, did come upon that man who long after did build Jericho, *1 Kings xvi. 21.* but we are not to think it made the place ever the worse when it was built, or brought any hurt to them that inhabited it: We find Jericho afterwards graced with the presence not only of those two great prophets Elijah and Elisha, but of our blessed Saviour himself, *Luke xix. 1. xviii. 35. Mat. xx. 29.* Note, It is a dangerous thing to attempt the building up of that which God will have to be destroyed. See *Mat. i. 4.*

Lastly, All this magnified Joshua and raised his reputation, *ver. 27.* it made him not only acceptable to Israel, but formidable to the Canaanites, because it appeared that God was with him of a truth; the Word of the Lord was with him, so the Chaldee, even Christ himself, the same that was with Moses. Nothing can more raise a man's reputation, nor make him appear more truly great, than to have the evidences of God's presence with him.

C H A P. VII.

*More than once we have found the affairs of Israel, that when they were in the happiest posture, and gave the most hopeful prospects, perplexed and embarrassed by sin, and a stop thereby put to the most promising proceedings. The golden calf, the murmuring at Kadesh, and the iniquity of Peor, had broke their measures and given them great disturbance; and in this chapter we have such another instance of the interruption given to the progress of their arms by sin: But it being only the sin of one person or family, and soon expiated, the consequences were not so mischievous as of those other; however, it served to let them know they were still upon their good behaviour. We have here, (1.) The sin of Achan in meddling with the accursed thing, *ver. 1.* (2.) The defeat of Israel before Ai thereupon, *ver. 2—5.* (3.) Joshua's humiliation and prayer on occasion of that sad disaster, *ver. 6—9.* (4.) The directions God gave them for the putting away of the guilt, which had provoked God thus to contend with them, *ver. 10—15.* (5.) The discovery, trial, conviction, condemnation and execution of the criminal, by which the anger of God was turned away, *ver. 16—26.* And by this story it appears that, as the law, so Canaan itself, made nothing perfect, the perfection both of holiness and peace to God's Israel is to be expected in the heavenly Canaan only.*

1. **B**UT the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel. 2. And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth-aven, on the east side of Beth-el, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai. 3. And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up: but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai, and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few. 4. So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men, and they fled before the men of Ai. 5. And the men of Ai, smote of them about thirty and six men; for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.

The story of this chapter begins with a *but*. The Lord was with Joshua and his fame was noised throughout all the country, so the foregoing chapter ends, and it left no room to doubt but that he would go on as he had begun, conquering and to conquer. He did right, and observed his orders in every thing. But the children of Israel committed a trespass, and so set God against them; and then even Joshua's name and fame, his wisdom and courage, could do them no service. If we lose our God, we lose our friends, who cannot help us unless God be for us. Now here is,

1. Achan's sinning, *ver. 1.* Here is only a general mention made of the sin, we shall afterwards have a more particular account of it from his own mouth. The sin is here said to be taking of the accursed thing, in disobedience to the command, and in defiance of the threatening, *chap. vi. 18.* In sacking of Jericho orders were given that they should neither spare any lives, nor take any treasure to themselves, we read of the breach of the former prohibition, none to whom they shewed any mercy, but of the latter; compassion was put off and yielded to the law, but covetousness was not. The love of the world is that root of bitterness which of all other is most hardly rooted up: Yet the history of Achan is a plain intimation that he of all the thousands of Israel was the only delinquent in this matter. Had there been more in like manner guilty, no doubt we should have heard of it; and it is strange there were no more: The temptation was strong, it was easy to suggest what pity it was that so many things of value should be burnt, to what purpose is this waste? In plundering of cities every man reckons himself intitled to what he can lay his hands on: It was easy to promise themselves secrecy and impunity: Yet by the grace of God such impressions were made upon the minds of the Israelites by the ordinances of God, circumcision and the passover, which they had lately been partakers of, and by the providences of God which had been concerning them, that they stood in awe of the divine precept and judgment, and generously denied themselves in obedience to their God. And yet though it was a single person that sinned, the children of Israel are said to commit the trespass, because one of their body did it, and he was not as yet separated from them, nor disowned by them. They did it, i. e. by what Achan did, guilt was derived from the whole society of which he was a member: This should be a warning to us to take heed of sin ourselves, lest by it many be defiled or disquieted, *Heb. xii. 15.* and to take heed of having fellowship with sinners, and of being in with them, lest we share in their guilt. Many a careful tradesman has been broken by a careless partner. And it concerns us to watch over one another for the preventing of sin, because other sins may rebound to our damage.

2. The camp of Israel suffering for the same. The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel; he saw the offence, though they did not, and takes a course to make them to see it; for, one way or other, sooner or later, secret sins will be brought to light; and if men enquire not after them, God will, and with his enquiries will awaken theirs. Many a community is under guilt and wrath, and is not aware of it, till the fire breaks out; here it brake out quickly.

1. Joshua sends a detachment to seize upon the next city that was in their way, and that was Ai. Only three thousand men were sent, advice being brought him by thy spies that the place was inconsiderable, and needed no greater force for the reduction of it, *ver. 2, 3.* Now perhaps it was a culpable assurance, or security rather, that they sent so small a party on this expedition, and an indulgence to the people in the love of ease: for they will not have all the people to labour thither; perhaps the people were less forward to go upon this expedition, because they were denied the plunder of Jericho; and these spies were willing they should be gratified. Whereas when that town was to be taken, though God by his own power would throw down the walls, yet they must all labour thither, and labour there too, in walking round it. It did not bode well at all, that God's Israel began to think much of their labour, and contrived how to spare their pains. It is required that we work out our salvation, though it is God that works in us. It has likewise often proved of ill consequence, to make too light of an enemy. They are but few (say the spies) but as few as they were they were too many for them. It will awaken our care and diligence in our christian warfare, to consider that we wrestle with principalities and powers.

2. This party he sent in their first attack upon the town were repulsed with some loss, *ver. 4, 5.* they fled before the men of Ai, finding themselves unaccountably dispirited, and their enemies to fall out upon them with more vigour and resolution than they expected. In their retreat they had about thirty-six men cut off; no great loss indeed out of such a number, but a dreadful surprise to those who had no reason to expect any other in any attack, but clear and cheap and certain victory: and now, as it proves, it is well there were but three thousand that fell under this disgrace. Had the body of the army been there, they had been no more able to keep their ground, now they were under guilt and wrath, than this small party, and to them the defeat would have been much more grievous and dishonourable. However, it was bad enough as it was, and served, (1.) To humble God's Israel, and to teach them always to rejoice with trembling. Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast, as he that putteth it off, (2.) To harden the Canaanites, and to make them the more secure, notwithstanding the terrors they have been struck with, that their ruin when it came might be the more dreadful. (3.) To be an evidence of God's displeasure against Israel, and a call to them to purge out the old leaven. And this was principally intended in their defeat.

3. The retreat of this party in disorder, put the whole camp of Israel into a fright, the hearts of the people melted, not so much for the loss as for the disappointment. Joshua had assured them that the living God would without fail drive out the Canaanites from before them, *chap. iii. 10.* How can this event be reconciled to that promise? To every thinking man among them it appeared an indication of God's displeasure, and an omen of something worse, and therefore no marvel it put them into such a consternation; if God turn to be their enemy and fight against them, what will become of them? True Israelites tremble when God is angry.

6. ¶ And Joshua rent his clothes and fell to the earth upon his face, before the ark of the LORD, until the even tide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads. 7. And Joshua said, Alas, O LORD God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us? Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan. 8. O LORD, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! 9. For the Canaanites, and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?

We have here an account of the mighty concern Joshua was in upon this sad occasion. He, as a public person, interested himself more than any other in this public loss, and is therein an example to princes and great men, and teaches them to lay much to heart the calamities that befall their people; he is also a type of Christ to whom the blood of his subjects is precious, *Psal. lxxii. 14.* Observe,

1. How he grieved. He rent his clothes, *ver. 6.* in token of great sorrow and

and a deep resentment of the trouble, and especially a dread of God's displeasure, which was certainly the cause of it. Had it been but the common chance of war (as we are too apt to express it) it had not become a general to droop thus under it: But when God was angry, it was his duty and honour to relent thus. One of the bravest soldiers that ever was, owned himself *trembled for the fear of God*, Psal. cxix. 120. As one *humbling himself under the mighty hand of God he fell to the earth upon his face* not thinking it any disparagement to him to lie thus low before the great God, to whom he directed these reverences, by keeping his eye towards *the ark of the Lord*. The elders of Israel, being interested in the cause, and influenced by his example, prostrated themselves with him, and, in token of deep humiliation, *put dust upon their heads*, not only as mourners, but as penitents; not doubting but it was for some sin or other that God did thus contend with them, (though they knew not what it was) they humbled themselves before God, and thus deprecated the progress of his wrath. This they continued *until even-tide*, to shew that it was not the result of a sudden passion, but proceeded from a deep conviction of their misery and danger if God were any way provoked to depart from them. Joshua did not fall foul upon his spies for their misinformation concerning the strength of the enemy, nor upon the soldiers for their cowardice, though perhaps both were blame-worthy, but *his eye is up to God*; for, *is there any evil in the camp, and he has not done it?* His eye is upon God as displeased, and that troubles him.

2. How he prayed, or pleaded rather, humbly expostulating the case with God, not sullen and out of humour, as David when *the Lord hath made a breach upon Uzra*, but much affected; his spirit seemed to be somewhat ruffled and discomposed, yet not so as to be put out of frame for prayer, but by giving vent to his trouble in an humble address to God, he keeps his temper, and it ends well.

1. Now he wisheth they had all taken up with the lot of the two tribes on the other side Jordan, *ver. 7.* He thinks it had been better to have staid there and been cut short, than come hither to be cut off. This favours too much of discontent and distrust of God, and cannot be justified, though the surprise and disappointment to one deeply concerned for the public interest may in part excuse it. Those words, *wherefore hast thou brought us over Jordan to destroy us*, are too like to what the murmurers often said, *Exod. xiv. 11, 12.—xv. 3.—xvi. 3.* Numb. xiv. 2, 3. but he that searcheth the heart knew they came from another spirit, and therefore was not extreme to *mark what he said amiss*. Had Joshua considered that this little disorder their affairs were put into, no doubt proceeded from something amiss, which yet might easily be redressed and all set to rights again (as often in his predecessor's time) he would not have spoken of it as a thing taken for granted, that they were *delivered into the hands of the Amorites to be destroyed*. God knows what he doth, though we do not, but this we may be sure of, he never did nor ever will, do us any wrong.

2. He speaks as one quite at a loss concerning the meaning of this event, *ver. 8.* *What shall I say*, what construction can I put upon it, when *Israel*, thy own people, for whom thou hast lately done such great things, and to whom thou has promised the full possession of this land, when they *turn their backs before their enemies*, their necks, to the word is; when they not only flee before them, but fall before them, and become a prey to them? What shall we think of the divine power? Is the Lord's arm shortened? Of the divine promise, is his word yea and nay? Of what God has done for us, shall that be all undone again and prove in vain? Note, The methods of providence are often intricate and perplexing, and such as the wisest and best of men know not what to say to; but *they shall know hereafter*, John xiii. 7.

3. He pleads the danger Israel was now in of being ruined; he gives up all for gone, *the Canaanites shall environ us round*, concluding that now our defence is departed, and the scales are turned in their favour, we shall be in their eyes as contemptible as ever we were formidable, and they shall *cut off our name from the earth*, *ver. 9.* Thus even good men, when things go against them a little, are too apt to fear the worst, and make harder conclusions than there is reason for. But this comes in here as a plea; Lord, let not Israel's name, which has been so dear to thee and so great in the world, be cut off.

4. He pleads the reproach that would be cast on God, and that if Israel were ruined his glory would suffer by it. They will *cut off our name*, saith he, yet as it he had corrected himself for insisting upon that, it is no great matter (thinks he) what comes of our little name, the cutting off of that will be a small loss, but *what wilt thou do for thy great name?* This he looks upon and laments as the great aggravation of the calamity; he feared it would reflect on God, his wisdom and power, his goodness and faithfulness; what would the Egyptians say? Note, Nothing is more grievous to a gracious soul than dishonour done to God's name. This also he insists upon as a plea for the preventing of his fears and a return of God's favour; it is the only word in all his address that has any encouragement in it, and he concludes with it, leaving it to this issue, *Father, glorify thy name*. The name of God is a great name, above every name; and whatever happens, we ought to believe that he will, and pray that he would, work for his own name, that *that may not be polluted*. This should be our concern more than any thing else, on this we must fix our eye as the end of all our desires, and from this we must fetch our encouragement as the foundation of all our hopes: we cannot urge a better plea than this, Lord, *What wilt thou do for thy great name?* Let God in all be glorified, and then welcome his whole will.

10. ¶ And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? 11. Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant, which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even amongst their own stuff. 12. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from amongst you. 13. Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from amongst you. 14. In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: And it shall be that the tribe which the LORD taketh, shall come according to the families thereof; and the family which the LORD shall take, shall come by households; and the household which the

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LORD shall take, shall come man by man. 15. And it shall be, that he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD; and because he hath wrought folly in Israel.

We have here God's answer to Joshua's address, which we may suppose came from the oracle over the ark, before which Joshua had prostrated himself, *ver. 6.* Those that desire to know the will of God, must attend with their desires upon the lively oracles, and wait at wisdom's gates for wisdom's dictates, *Prov. viii. 34.* And let those that find themselves under the tokens of God's displeasure never complain of him, but complain to him, and they shall receive an answer of peace. The answer came immediately, *while he was yet speaking*, Isa. lxx. 24. as that to Daniel, *chap. ix. 10.*

1. God encourageth Joshua against his present despondencies, and the black and melancholy apprehensions he had of the present posture of Israel's affairs, *ver. 10.* *Get thee up*, suffer not thy spirits to droop and sink thus, *wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?* No doubt, Joshua did well to humble himself before God, and mourn as he did under the tokens of his displeasure, but now God tells him, it was enough, he would not have him continue any longer in that melancholy posture, for God delights not in the griefs of penitents when they afflict their souls, farther than as it qualifies them for pardon and peace; the days even of that mourning must be ended. *Arise, shake thyself from the dust*, Isa. lii. 2. Joshua continued his mourning *till even-tide*, *ver. 6.* so late, that they could do nothing that night towards the discovery of the criminal, but were forced to put it off till next morning. Daniel (*chap. ix. 21.*) and Ezra (*chap. ix. 5, 6.*) continued their mourning only *till the time of the evening sacrifice*; that revived them both; but Joshua went past that time, and therefore is thus roused, *Get thee up*, do not lie all night there. Yet we find that Moses fell down before the Lord forty days and forty nights, to make intercession for Israel, *Deut. ix. 18.* Joshua must get up, because he has other work to do than to lie there; the accursed thing must be discovered and cast out, and the sooner the better; Joshua is the man that must do it, and therefore it is time for him to lay aside his mourning weeds and put on his judge's robes, and *clothe himself with zeal as a cloak*; weeping must not hinder sowing, nor one duty of religion jostle out another. Every thing is beautiful in its season. Shekariah perhaps had an eye to this in what he said to Ezra upon a like occasion. See *Ezra x. 2, 3, 4.*

2. He informs him of the true and only cause of this disaster, and shews him wherefore he contended with them, *ver. 11.* *Israel has sinned*. Think not that God's mind is changed, his arm shortened, or his promise about to fail, no, it is sin, it is sin, that great mischief-maker, that has stopped the current of divine favours, and has made this breach upon you. The sinner is not named, though the sin is described, but it is spoken of as the act of Israel in general, till they have fastened it upon the particular person, and their godly sorrow have so wrought a *cleaving of themselves*, as theirs did, *2 Cor. vii. 11.* Observe how the sin is here made to appear exceeding sinful. (1.) *They have transgressed my covenant*, an express precept with a penalty annexed to it. It was agreed, that God should have all the spoil of Jericho, and they should have the spoil of the rest of the cities of Canaan, but in robbing God of his part they *transgressed this covenant*. (2.) *They have even taken of the devoted thing*, in contempt of the curse which was so solemnly denounced against him that should dare to break in upon God's property, as if that curse had nothing in it formidable. (3.) *They have also stolen*; they did it clandestinely, as if they could conceal it from the divine omniscience, and they were ready to say, *The Lord shall not see*, or will not miss so small a matter out of so great a spoil. *Thus thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself*. (4.) *They have dissembled also*. Probably when the action was over, Joshua called all the tribes, and asked them, whether they had faithfully disposed of the spoil, according to the divine command, and charged them, if they knew of any transgression, they should discover it, but Achan joined with the rest in a general protestation of innocency, and kept his countenance, like the adulteress woman that *eats and wipes her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness*. Nav. (5.) *They have put the accursed thing among their own goods*, as if they had as good a title to that as to any thing they have; never expecting to be called to an account, nor designing to make restitution. All this Joshua, though a wise and vigilant ruler, knew nothing of it till God told him, who knows all the secret wickedness that is in the world, which men know nothing of. God could at this time have told him who the person was that had done this thing, but doth not. (1.) To exercise the zeal of Joshua and Israel, in searching out the criminal. (2.) To give the sinner himself space to repent and make confession. Joshua, no doubt, proclaimed it presently throughout the camp, that there was such a transgression committed, upon which if Achan had surrendered himself, and penitently owned his guilt, and prevented the scrutiny, who knows but he might have had the benefit of that law which *accepted of a trespass-offering*, with restitution, from those that had *sinned through ignorance in the holy things of the law*, *Lev. v. 15, 16.* But Achan never discovering himself till the lot discovered him, evidenced the badness of his heart, and therefore he found no mercy.

3. He awakens him to enquire farther into it, by telling him, (1.) That this was the only ground for the controversy God had with them, this, and nothing else; so that when this accursed thing was put away, he needs not fear, all would be well, the stream of their successes, when this one obstruction was removed, would run as strong as ever. (2.) That if this accursed thing were not destroyed, they could not expect the return of God's gracious presence; in plain terms, *neither will be with you any more* as I have been, *except ye destroy the accursed*, i. e. the accursed person who is made so by the accursed thing. That which is accursed will be destroyed, and they whom God has intrusted to bear the sword, bear it in vain, if they make it not a terror to that wickedness, which brings these judgments of God on a land. By personal repentance and reformation, we destroy the accursed thing in our own hearts, and unless we do that we must never expect the favour of the blessed God. Let all men know, it is nothing but sin that separates between them and God, and if that be not sincerely repented of and forsaken, it will separate eternally.

4. He directs him in what method to make this enquiry and prosecution. (1.) He must *sanctify the people*, now over-night, that is, as it is explained, he must command them to *sanctify themselves*, *ver. 13.* And what can either magistrates or ministers do more towards sanctification? They must put themselves into a suitable frame to appear before God, and submit to the divine scrutiny; must examine themselves, now God was coming to examine them, *must prepare to meet their God*. They were called to sanctify themselves, when they were to receive the divine law, *Exod. xix.* and now also when they were to come under the divine judgment, for in both God is to be attended with the utmost reverence. There is an *accursed thing in the midst of thee*, and therefore *sanctify yourselves*, i. e. Let all that are innocent be able to clear themselves, and be the more careful to cleanse themselves; the sins of others may be improved by us, as furtherances of our sanctification; as the scandal

of the incestuous Corinthian occasioned a blessed reformation in that Church, 2 Cor. vii. 11. *John* xvii. 8. (2.) He must bring them all under the scrutiny of the lot, *ver.* 14. the tribe which the guilty person was of should first be discovered by lot, then the family, then the household, and last of all the person. The conviction came upon him thus gradually, that he might have some space given him to come in and surrender himself, for God is *not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* Observe, The Lord is said to take the tribe, and family, and household; on which the lot fell; because *the disposal of the lot is of the Lord,* and however casual it seems, is under the direction of infinite wisdom and justice: and to shew, that when the sin of sinners finds them out, God is to be acknowledged in it: it is he that seizeth them, and the arrests are in his name. *God has found out the iniquity of thy servants,* Gen. xlv. 16. It is also intimated with what a certain and unerring judgment the righteous God doth and will distinguish between the innocent and the guilty, so that though for a time they seem involved in the same condemnation, as the whole tribe did when it was first taken by the lot, yet he who has his fan in his hand will effectually provide for the *taking out of the precious from the vile;* so that though the righteous be of the same tribe, and family, and household, with the wicked, yet they shall never be treated *as the wicked,* Gen. xviii. 25. (3.) When the criminal was found out, he must be put to death *without mercy.* (Heb. x. 28.) and with all the expressions of a holy detestation, *ver.* 15. He and all that he has must be burnt with fire, that there might be no remainders of the accursed thing among them; and the reason given for this severe sentence is, because the criminal has, (1.) Given a great affront to God, he has *transgressed the covenant of the Lord,* who is jealous particularly for the honour of the holy covenant. (2.) He has done a great injury to the Church of God, he has *wrought folly in Israel,* hath shamed that nation, which is looked upon by all its neighbours to be a *wise and an understanding people;* hath infected that nation, which is sanctified to God, and troubled that nation which he is the protector of. These being crimes so heinous in their nature, and of such pernicious consequence and example, the execution, which otherwise would have come under the imputation of cruelty, is to be applauded as a piece of necessary justice. It was SACRILEGE, it was invading God's rights, alienating his property, and converting to a private use that which was devoted to his glory, and appropriated to the service of his sanctuary, that was to be thus severely punished for warning to all people in all ages to take heed how they rob God.

16. ¶ So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken: 17. And he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarahites: and he brought the family of the Zarahites man by man; and Zabdi was taken: 18. And he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. 19. And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done, hide it not from me. 20. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done. 21. When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it. 22. ¶ So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran into the tent; and behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. 23. And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD. 24. And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. 25. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned him with stones. 26. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day: So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger: wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.

We have in these verses,

1. The discovery of Achan by the lot, which proved a perfect lot though it proceeded gradually. Though we may suppose that Joshua slept the better, and with more ease and satisfaction, when he knew the worst of the disease of that body which, under God, he was the head of, and was put into a certain method of cure, yet he *rose up early in the morning,* *ver.* 16. so much was his heart upon it, to put away the accursed thing. We have found Joshua upon other occasions an early riser, here it shews his zeal and vehement desire to see Israel restored to the divine favour. In the scrutiny observe, (1.) That the guilty tribe was that of Judah, which was, and was to be, of all the tribes the most honourable and illustrious; this was an allay to their dignity, and might serve as a check to their pride: many there were which were its glories, but here was one that was its reproach. Let not the best families think it strange if there be those found in them, and descending from them that prove their grief and shame. Judah was to have the first and largest lot in Canaan, the more inexcusable is one of that tribe, if not content, to wait for his own share, he breaks in upon God's property. The Jews tradition is, that when the tribe of Judah was taken, the valiant men of that tribe drew their swords, and professed they would not sheathe them again till they saw the criminal punished, and themselves cleared that knew their own innocency. (2.) That the guilty person was at length fastened upon, and the language of the lot was, *thou art the man,* *ver.* 18. It was strange that Achan, being conscious to himself of guilt,

when he saw the lot came nearer and nearer to him, had not either the wit to make an escape, or the grace to make a confession; but *his heart was hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,* and it proved to be *to his own destruction.* We may well imagine how his countenance changed, and what horror and confusion seized him when he was singled out as the delinquent, when the eyes of all Israel were fastened upon him, and every one was ready to say, *Have we found thee, O our enemy!* See here, 1. The folly of those that promise themselves secretly in sin; the righteous God has many ways of bringing to light the hidden works of darkness, and so bringing to shame and ruin those that continue their fellowship with those unfruitful works. *A bird of the air,* when God pleaseth, shall *carry the voice,* Eccles. x. 20. See *Psal.* xciv. 7, &c. 2. How much it is our concern, when God is contending with us, to find out what the cause of action is, what the particular sin is, that, like Achan, troubles our camp. We must thus examine ourselves, and carefully review the records of conscience, that we may find out the accursed thing, and pray earnestly with holy Job, *Lord, shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.* Discover the traitor, and he shall be no longer harboured.

2. His arraignment and examination, *ver.* 19. Joshua sits judge, and though abundantly satisfied of his guilt by the determination of the lot, yet urges him to make a penitent confession, that his soul may be saved by it in the other world, though he could not give him any encouragement to hope that he should save his life by it. Observe, 1. How he bespeaks him with the greatest mildness and tenderness that could be, like a true disciple of Moses. He might justly have called him thief and rebel, *Raca* and thou fool, but he calls him son; he might have adjured him to confess, as the high priest did our blessed Saviour, or threatened him with the torture to extort a confession, but for love's sake he rather beseecheth him, I pray thee make confession. This is an example to all not to insult over those that are in misery, though they have brought themselves into it by their own wickedness, but to treat even offenders with the spirit of meekness, not knowing what we ourselves should have been and done, if God had put us into the hand of our own counsels. It is likewise an example to magistrates, in executing justice, to govern their own passions with a strict and prudent hand, and never suffer themselves to be transported by them into any indecencies of behaviour or language, no not towards those that have given the greatest provocations. *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.* Let them remember the judgment is God's, who is Lord of his anger. This is the likeliest method of bringing offenders to repentance. 2. What he bespeaks him to do; to confess the fact, to confess it to God, the party offended by the crime; Joshua was to him in God's stead, so that in confessing to him he confessed to God. Hereby he would satisfy Joshua and the congregation concerning that which was laid to his charge; his confession would also be an evidence of his repentance, and a warning to others to take heed of sinning after the similitude of his transgression: but that which Joshua aims at herein, is, that God might be honoured by it, as the Lord, the God of infinite knowledge and power, from whom no secrets are hid; and as the God of Israel, who as he doth particularly resent affronts given to his Israel, so he doth the affronts given him by Israel. Note, In confessing sin, as we take shame to ourselves, so we give glory to God as a righteous God, owning him justly displeased with us, and as a good God who will not improve our confessions as evidences against us, but is faithful and just to forgive, then when we are brought to own that he would be faithful and just if he should punish. By sin we have injured God in his honour, Christ by his death has made satisfaction for the injury; but it is required that we by repentance shew our good-will to his honour, and as far as in us lies give glory to him. Bishop Patrick quotes the Samaritan chronicle, making Joshua to say here to Achan, *Lift up thine eyes to the king of heaven and earth, and acknowledge that nothing can be hid from him who knoweth the greatest secrets.*

3. His confession, which, now at last, when he saw it was to no purpose to conceal his crime, was free and ingenious enough, *ver.* 20, 21. Here is, 1. A penitent acknowledgment of the fault. Indeed I have sinned, what I am charged with is too true to be denied, and too bad to be excused. I own it, I lament it; the Lord is righteous in bringing it to light, for indeed I have sinned. This is the language of a penitent that is sick of his sin, and whose conscience is loaded with it. I have nothing to accuse any one else of, but a great deal to say against myself, it is with me that the accursed thing is found, I am the man who have *perverted that which was right,* and it *profited me not.* And that wherewith he aggravates the sin is, that it was committed *against the Lord God of Israel:* He was himself an Israelite, a sharer with the rest of that exalted nation in their privileges, so that in offending the God of Israel he offended his own God, which laid him under the guilt of the basest treachery and ingratitude imaginable. 2. A particular narrative of the fact, *thus and thus have I done.* God had told Joshua in general that a part of the devoted things was alienated, but leaves it to him to draw from Achan an account of the particulars, for, one way or other, God will make sinners *own tongues to fall upon themselves,* (Psal. lxi. 8.) If ever he brings them to repentance, they will be their own accusers, and their awakened conscience will be instead of a thousand witnesses. Note, It becomes penitents, in the confession to their sin to God, to be very particular; not only I have sinned, but in this and that instance I have sinned; reflecting with regret upon all the steps that led to the sin, and all the circumstances that aggravated it and made it exceeding sinful; *thus and thus have I done.* He confesseth, (1.) to the things taken. In plundering a house in Jericho he found a goodly Babylonish garment; the word signifies a robe, such as princes wore when they appeared in state, probably, it belonged to the king of Jericho: it was far fetched, if fetched, as we translate it, from Babylon. A garment of divers colours, so some render it; whatever it was, in his eyes it made a very glorious shew; a thousand pities (thinks Achan) that it should be burnt, then it will do no body any good, if I take it for myself it will serve me many a year for my best coat; under these pretences he makes bold with this first, and thinks it no harm to save it from the fire; but his hand being thus in, he proceeds to take a bag of money, *two hundred shekels,* i. e. one hundred ounces of silver, and a *wedge of gold which weighed fifty shekels,* i. e. twenty-five ounces. He could not plead that in taking of these he saved them from the fire, for the silver and gold were to be laid up in the treasury, but they that make a slight excuse to serve in daring to commit one sin, will have their hearts so hardened by that, that they will venture upon the next without such an excuse; for the way of sin is down-hill. See what a poor prize it was for which Achan ran this desperate hazard, and what an unspeakable loser he was by the bargain. See *Matth.* xvi. 26. (2.) He confesseth the manner of taking them. 1. The sin began in the eye. He saw these fine things, as Eve saw the forbidden fruit, and was strangely charmed with the sight. See what comes of suffering the heart to walk after the eyes; and what need we to have, to *make this covenant with our eyes;* that if they wander they shall be sure to weep for it. *Look not thou upon the wine that is red;* upon the woman that is fair; close the right eye that thus offends thee, to prevent the necessity of plucking it out, and casting it from thee, *Matth.* v. 28, 29. 2. It proceeded out of the heart. He owns, I coveted them. Thus lust conceived and brought forth this sin. They that would be kept from sinful actions, must mortify and check

in themselves sinful desires, particularly, the desire of worldly wealth, which we more particularly call covetousness. O what a world of evil is the love of money the root of! Had Achan looked upon these things with an eye of faith, he would have seen them accursed things, and would have dreaded them, but looking upon them with an eye of sense only, he saw them goodly things, and coveted them. It was not the looking but the lusting that ruined him. 3. When he had committed it he was very industrious to conceal it. Having taken of the forbidden treasures, fearing, lest any search should be made for prohibited goods, he hid them in the earth, as one that resolved to keep what he had got, and never to make restitution. Thus doth Achan confess the whole matter, that God might be justified in the sentence passed upon him. See the *deceitfulness of sin*, that which is pleasing in the commission is bitter in the reflection; at the last it bites like a serpent. Particularly, see what comes of ill-gotten goods, and how they will be cheated that rob God, *Job xx. 15. He hath swallowed down riches and he shall vomit them up again.*

4. His conviction. God had convicted him by the lot; he had convicted himself by his own confession; but that no room might be left for the most discontented Israelite to object against the process, Joshua has him farther convicted by the searching of his tent, in which the goods were found which he confessed to. Particular notice is taken of the haste which the messengers made that were sent to search, they ran to the tent, ver. 22. Not only to shew their readiness to obey Joshua's orders, but to shew how uneasy they were till the camp was cleared of the accursed thing, that they might regain the divine favour. They that feel themselves under wrath, find themselves concerned not to defer the putting away of sin. Delays are dangerous, and it is no time to trifle. When the stolen goods were brought, they were laid out before the Lord, ver. 23. That all Israel might see how plain the evidence was against Achan, and might adore the strictness of God's judgments in punishing so severely the stealing of such small things, and yet the justice of his judgments in maintaining his right to devoted things, and might be afraid of ever offending in the like kind. In laying them out before the Lord, they acknowledged his title to them, and waited to receive his directions concerning them. Note, Those that think to put a cheat upon God do but deceive themselves, what is taken from him he will recover, *Hos. ii. 9.* and will be a loser by no man at last.

5. His condemnation. Joshua passeth sentence upon him, ver. 25. *Why hast thou troubled us?* There is the ground of the sentence, *O how much hast thou troubled us!* So some read it. He refers to what was said when the warning was given not to meddle with the accursed thing, chap. vi. 18. *lest ye make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.* Note, Sin is a very troublesome thing, not only to the sinner himself, but to all about him. *He that is greedy of gain, as Achan was, troubleth his own house,* Prov. xv. 27. and all the communities he belongs to. Now (saith Joshua) *God shall trouble thee.* See why Achan was so severely dealt with, not only because he had robbed God, but because he had troubled Israel; over his head he had (as it were) this accusation written, *Achan, the troubler of Israel*, as Ahab, *1 Kings xviii. 18.* This therefore is his doom, *God shall trouble thee.* Note, The righteous God will certainly recompence tribulation to them that trouble his people, *2 Thess. i. 6.* Those that are troublesome should be troubled. Some of the Jewish doctors, from that word which determines the troubling of him to this day, infer, that therefore he should not be troubled in the world to come; the flesh was destroyed that the spirit might be saved, and if so, the dispensation was really less severe than it seemed. In the description, both of his sin and of his punishment, by the trouble that was in both, there is a plain allusion to this name Achan, or, as he is called, *1 Chron. ii. 7. Achar.* which signifies trouble. He did too much answer his name.

6. His execution. No reprieve could be obtained, a gangrened member must be cut off presently. When he is proved to be an anathema, and the troubler of the camp, we may suppose all the people cry out against him, *Away with him, away with him; Stone him, stone him!* Here is, 1. The place of execution. They brought him out of the camp, in token of their putting far from them that wicked person, *1 Cor. v. 13.* When our Lord Jesus was made a curse for us, that by this trouble we might have peace, he suffered as an accursed thing without the gate, bearing our reproach, *Heb. xiii. 12, 13.* The execution was at a distance, that the camp which was disturbed by Achan's sin, might not be defiled by his death. 2. The persons employed in his execution, it was the act of all Israel, ver. 24, 25. They were all spectators of it, that they might see and fear. Public executions are public examples. Nay, they were all consenting to his death, and as many as could were active in it, in token of the universal detestation they conceived of his sacrilegious attempt, and their dread of God's displeasure against them. 3. The partakers with him in the punishment, for he perished not alone in his iniquity, chap. xxii. 20. (1.) The stolen goods were destroyed with him, the garment burnt, as it should have been with the rest of the combustible things in Jericho, and the silver and gold defaced, melted, lost, and buried in the ashes of the rest of his goods, under the heap of stones, so as never to be put to any other use, (2.) All his other goods were destroyed likewise, not only his tent, and the furniture of that, but his oxen, asses, and sheep; to shew, that goods got unjustly, especially if they be got by sacrilege, will not only turn to no account, but will blast and waste the rest of the possessions to which they are added. The eagle in the fable, that stole flesh from the altar, brought a coal of fire with it, which burnt her nest, *Hab. ii. 9, 10. Zech. v. 5.* They lose their own, that grasp at more than their own. (3.) His sons and daughters were put to death with him. Some indeed think that they were brought out (ver. 24.) only to be the spectators of their father's punishment, but must conclude that they died with him, and that they must be meant, ver. 25. where it is said, they burned them with fire, after they had stoned him with stones. God had expressly provided that magistrates should not put the children to death for their father's sin, but he did not intend to bind himself by that law, and in this case he had expressly ordered, ver. 15. that the criminal, and all that he had, should be burnt. Perhaps his sons and daughters were aiders and abettors in the villainy, and helped to carry off the accursed thing. It is very probable, that they assisted in the concealment, and that he could not hide them in the midst of his tent, but they must know and keep his counsel, and so they became accessaries *ex post facto*; and if they were never so little partakers in the crime, it was so heinous, that they were justly sharers in the punishment. However, God was hereby glorified, and the judgment executed was thus made the more tremendous. 4. The punishment itself that was inflicted on him, He was stoned, some think, as a sabbath-breaker, supposing that the sacrilege was committed on the sabbath day; and then his dead body was burnt, as an accursed thing, of which there should be no remainder left. The concurrence of all the people in this execution, teaches us how much it is the interest of a nation, that all in it should contribute what they can, in their places, to the suppressing of vice and prophaneness, and the reformation of manners; sin is a reproach to any people, and therefore every Israelite indeed will have a stone to throw at it. 5. The pacifying of God's wrath hereby, ver. 26. *The Lord turned*

from the fierceness of his anger. The putting away of sin by true repentance and reformation, as it is the only way, so it is a sure and most effectual way to recover the divine favour. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease.

7. The record of his conviction and execution; care was taken to preserve the remembrance of it for warning and instruction to posterity: 1. A heap of stones was raised on the place where Achan was executed, every one perhaps of the congregation throwing a stone to the heap, in token of his detestation of the crime. 2. A new name was given to the place, it was called, the Valley of Achor, or Trouble. This was a perpetual brand of infamy upon Achan's name, and a perpetual warning to all people not to invade God's property. By this severity against Achan, the honour of Joshua's government, now in the infancy of it, was maintained, and Israel at their entrance upon the promised Canaan, were minded to observe, at their peril, the provisos and limitations of the grant by which they held it. The Valley of Achor is said to be given for a door of hope, because when we put away the accursed thing, then there begins to be hope in Israel, *Hos. ii. 15. Ezra x. 2.*

C H A P. VIII.

The embarrassment which Achan's sin gave to the affairs of Israel being over, we have them here in a very good posture again, the affairs both of war and religion. Here is, (1.) The glorious progress of their arms in the taking of Ai, before which they had lately received a disgrace. 1. God encourageth Joshua to attack it, with the assurance of success, and directs him what method to take, ver. 1, 2. 2. Joshua gives orders accordingly to the men of war, ver. 3—9. 3. The stratagem is managed as it was projected, and succeeds as it was desired, ver. 9—22. 4. Joshua becomes master of this city, puts all the inhabitants to the sword, burns it, hangs the king, and gives the plunder to the soldiers, ver. 23—29. (2.) The great solemnity of writing and reading the law before a great assembly of all Israel, drawn up for that purpose upon the two mountains of Gerizim and Ebal, according to an order which Moses had received from the Lord, and delivered to them, ver. 30—35. Thus did they take their work before them, and made the business of their religion to keep pace with their secular business.

1. **AND** the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land. 2. And thou shalt do to Ai and her king, as thou didst unto Jericho and her king: only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves: lay thee an ambush for the city behind it.

Israel was very happy in having such a commander as Joshua, but Joshua was more happy in having such a director as God himself, when any difficulty occurred, he needed not to call a council of war, who had God's might unto him, not only to answer, but even to prevent his enquiries. It should seem Joshua was now at a stand, had scarce recovered the discomposure he was put into by the trouble Achan gave them, could not think, without fear and trembling, of pushing forward, lest there should be in the camp another Achan; then God spake to him, either by vision, as before, chap. v. as a man of war with his sword drawn, or by the breast-plate of judgment. Note, When we have faithfully put away sin, that accursed thing, which separates between us and God, then, and not till then, we may expect to be freed from God to our comfort; and God's directing us how to go on in our christian work and warfare, is a good evidence of his being reconciled to us. Observe here,

1. The encouragement God gives to Joshua to proceed; *Fear not, neither be thou dismayed*, ver. 1. This intimates, that the sin of Achan, and the consequences of it, had been a very great discouragement to Joshua, and made his heart almost ready to fail. Corruptions within the Church weaken the hands, and damp the spirits of her guides and helpers, more than oppositions from without; treacherous Israelites are to be dreaded more than malicious Canaanites. But God bids Joshua not to be dismayed, the same power that keeps Israel from being ruined by their enemies, shall keep them from ruining themselves. To animate him, (1.) He assures him of success against Ai, tells him it is all his own, but he must take it as God's gift, *I have given it into thy hand*, which secured him both title and possession, and obliged him to give God the glory of both, *Psal. xlv. 3.* (2.) He allows the people to take the spoil to themselves. Here the spoil was not consecrated to God as that of Jericho, and therefore there was no danger of the people's committing such a trespass as they had committed there. Observe, How Achan, who caught at forbidden spoil, lost that, and life, and all, but the rest of the people who had conscientiously refrained from the accursed thing, were presently recompensed for their obedience with the spoil of Ai; the way to have the comfort of what God allows us, is to forbear what he forbids us. No man shall lose by his self-denial, let God have his dues first, and then all will be clean to us and sure, *1 Kings xvii. 13.* God did not bring them to these goodly cities, and houses filled with all good things, to tantalize them with the sight of that which they might not touch; but having received the first fruits from Jericho, the spoil of Ai, and of all the cities which from henceforward came into their hands, they might take for a prey to themselves.

2. The direction he gives him in attacking Ai. It must not be such a work of time as the taking of Jericho was, that would have prolonged the war too much; they that had patiently waited seven days for Jericho, shall have Ai given them in one day. Nor was it as that, to be taken by miracle, and purely by the act of God, but now their own conduct and courage must be exercised; having seen God work for them, they must now besir themselves. God directs him, 1. To take all the people, that they might all be spectators of the action, and sharers in the spoil. Hereby God gave him a tacit rebuke for sending so small a detachment against Ai, in the former attempt upon it, chap. vii. 4. 2. To lay an ambush behind the city, this was a method which perhaps Joshua had not thought of at this time, if God had not directed him to it; and though now we are not to expect direction, as here by visions, voices, or oracles, yet whenever those who are entrusted with public counsels, take prudent measures for the public good, it must be acknowledged that God puts it into their hearts, he that teacheth the husbandman discretion, no doubt, teacheth the statesman and general.

3. ¶ So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai: and Joshua chose out thirty thousand mighty men of valour, and sent them away by night. 4. And he commanded them, saying, Behold, ye shall lie in wait against the city, *even* behind the city: go not very far from the city, but be ye all ready: 5. And I, and all the people that *are* with me, will approach unto the city: and it shall come to pass when they come out against us, as at the first, that we will flee before them. 6. (For they will come out after us) till we have drawn them from the city; for they will say, They flee before us, as at the first: therefore we will flee before them. 7. Then ye shall rise up from the ambush, and seize upon the city: for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. 8. And it shall be, when ye have taken the city, *that* ye shall set the city on fire: according to the commandment of the LORD shall ye do. See, I have commanded you. 9. ¶ Joshua therefore sent them forth; and they went to lie in ambush, and abode between Beth-el and Ai, on the west side of Ai: but Joshua lodged that night among the people. 10. And Joshua rose up early in the morning, and numbered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai. 11. And all the people, *even the people* of war that were with him, went up, and drew nigh, and came before the city, and pitched on the north side of Ai: now *there was* a valley between them and Ai. 12. And he took about five thousand men, and set them to lie in ambush between Beth-el and Ai, on the west side of the city. 13. And when they had set the people, *even* all the host that *was* on the north of the city, and their liers in wait on the west of the city, Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley. 14. ¶ And it came to pass, when the king of Ai saw *it*, that they hastened and rose up early, and the men of the city went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at a time appointed, before the plain; but he wist not that *there were* liers in ambush against him, behind the city. 15. And Joshua, and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. 16. And all the people that *were* in Ai, were called together to pursue after them: and they pursued after Joshua, and were drawn away from the city. 17. And there was not a man left in Ai, or Beth-el, that went not out after Israel: and they left the city open, and pursued after Israel. 18. And the LORD said unto Joshua, Stretch out the spear that *is* in thy hand, toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand. And Joshua stretched out the spear that *he had* in his hand, toward the city. 19. And the ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand: and they entered into the city, and took it, and hastened, and set the city on fire. 20. And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and behold, the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that way: and the people that fled to the wilderness, turned back upon the pursuers. 21. And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city, and that the smoke of the city ascended, then they turned again, and slew the men of Ai. 22. And the other issued out of the city against them, so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side, and they smote them, so that they let none of them remain, or escape.

We have here an account of the taking of Ai by stratagem. The stratagem here used, we are sure, was lawful and good; God himself appointed it, and we have no reason to think, but that the like is lawful and good in other wars. Here was no league broken, no oath or promise violated, nor any thing like it; it was not by the pretence of a parley, or treaty of peace, that the advantage was gained, no, these are sacred things, and not to be jest with; nor used to serve a turn; truth, when once it is plighted, becomes a debt, even to an enemy. But in this stratagem here was no untruth told, nothing was concealed but their own counsels, which no enemy ever pretended a right to be entrusted with, nothing was dissembled, nothing counterfeited but a retreat, which was no natural or necessary indication at all of their inability to maintain their outset, or of any design not to renew it; the enemy ought to have been upon their guard, and to have kept within the defence of their own walls; common prudence, had they been governed by it, would have directed them not to venture the pursuit of an army which they saw so far superior to them in numbers, and to leave their city unguarded; but (*si populus vult decipi, decipiatur*) if the Canaanites will be so easily imposed upon, and, in pursuit of God's Israel, will break through all the laws of policy and good management, the Israelites are not at all to be blamed for taking advantage of their fury and incogitancy; nor is it any way inconsistent with the character God is pleased to give of them, that they are *children that will not lie*.

Now in the account here given of this matter,

1. There is something of difficulty in adjusting the numbers that were employed to effect it. Mention is made, *ver. 3. of thirty thousand*, that were chosen and sent away by night, to whom the charge was given to sur-

prize the city as soon as ever they perceived it was evacuated, *ver. 4, 7, 8*. And yet afterwards, *ver. 12*, it is said, Joshua took five thousand men and set them to lie in ambush behind the city, and that *ambush entered the city*, and set it on fire, *ver. 19*. Now, (1.) Some think there were two parties sent out to lie in ambush, thirty thousand first, and afterwards five thousand to guard the roads, and to intercept those of the city that might think to save themselves by flight, or to strengthen those that were first sent out; and that Joshua made his open attack upon the city, with all the thousands of Israel. So the learned Bishop Patrick, insisting upon God's command, *ver. 1. to take all the people of war with him*. But, (2.) Others think that all the people were taken only to encamp before the city, and that out of them Joshua chose out thirty thousand men to be employed in the action, out of which he sent out five thousand to lie in ambush, which were as many as could be supposed to march *incognito*, and more would have been discovered, and the design broken; and that then with the other twenty-five thousand he made the open attack, as Mausus thinks, or with the thirty thousand, which, as Calvin thinks, he kept entire for that purpose, having besides them sent out five thousand for an ambuscade. And those five thousand (they think) must be meant by them, *ver. 3.* which he sent away by night, with orders to lie in wait behind the city, though the particular number be not specified till *ver. 12*. If we may admit such a seeming disturbance in the order of the narrative (of the like to which, perhaps, instances might be given in the other scripture histories) it seems most probable that there was but one ambuscement, which consisted only of five thousand, enough for such a purpose.

2. Yet the principal parts of the story are plain enough, that a detachment being secretly marched behind the city, on the other side to that on which the main body of the army lay, the situation of the country, it is probable, favouring their concealment, Joshua, and the forces with him, faced the city; the garrison made a vigorous sally out upon them, whereupon they withdrew, gave ground, and retreated in some seeming disorder towards the wilderness; which the men of Ai being aware of, drew out all the force they had to pursue them: This gave a fair opportunity for them that lay in ambush to make themselves masters of the city, whereof when they had given notice by a smoke to Joshua, he, with all his force, returned upon the pursuers, who now, when it was too late, were aware of the snare they were drawn into, but their retreat being intercepted, they were every man of them cut off. The like artifice we find used, *Judg. xx. 30, &c.*

Now in this story we may observe,

1. What a brave commander Joshua was. See, (1.) His conduct and prudence. God gave him the hint, *ver. 2.* that he should lay an ambush behind the city, but left him to himself to order the particulars, which he did admirably well. Doubtless, *Wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten mighty men*, *Ecc. vii. 19*. (2.) His care and industry, *ver. 10. He rose up early in the morning*, that he might lose no time, and to shew how intent his mind was upon his business. Those that would maintain their spiritual conflicts must not love their ease. (3.) His courage and resolution, though an army of Israelites had been repulsed before Ai, yet he resolves to lead them on in person the second time, *ver. 5*. Being himself also an elder, he took the elders of Israel with him to make this attack upon the city, *ver. 10.* as if he was going rather to sit in judgment upon them as criminals, than to fight them as enemies. (4.) His caution and consideration, *ver. 13.* He went that night into the midst of the valley, to make the necessary dispositions for an attack, and to see that every thing was in good order. It is the pious conjecture of the learned Bishop Patrick, that he went into the valley alone to pray to God for a blessing upon his enterprise, and he did not seek in vain. (5.) His constancy and perseverance when he had stretched out his spear towards the city, *ver. 18.* (a spear almost as fatal and formidable to the enemies of Israel as the rod of Moses was) he never drew back his hand till the work was done. His hands in fighting, like Moses's in interceding, were steady to the going down of the sun. Those that have stretched out their hands against their spiritual enemies, must never draw them back. Lastly, What Joshua did in the stratagem is applicable to our Lord Jesus, of whom he was a type. Joshua conquered by yielding, as if he had himself been conquered; so our Lord Jesus, when he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, seemed as if death had triumphed over him, and as if he and all his interests had been routed and ruined; but in his resurrection he rallied again, and gave the powers of darkness a total defeat; broke the serpent's head by suffering him to bruise his heel. A glorious stratagem.

2. What an obedient people Israel was; what Joshua commanded them to do according to the commandment of the Lord, *ver. 8.* they did it without murmuring or disputing. They that were sent to lie in ambush between Beth-el and Ai (two cities confederate against them) were in a post of danger, and had they been discovered, might all have been cut off, and yet they ventured it; and when the body of the army retreated and fled, it was both disgraceful and perilous, and yet in obedience to Joshua they did it.

3. What an insatuated enemy the king of Ai was, (1.) That he did not by his scouts discover those that lay in ambush behind the city, *ver. 14*. Some observe it is a remarkable instance of the power of God in making men blind to their own interest, and the things that belong to their peace, that he wist not that there were liers in wait against him. They are most in danger, who are least aware that they are so. (2.) That when Israel seemed to fly, he drew out all his forces to pursue them, and left none to guard his city, and to secure his retreat, *ver. 17*. Thus the Church's enemies often run themselves into destruction by their own fury and the violence of their rage against the Israel of God. Pharaoh plunged himself into the Red-sea by the eagerness of his pursuit of Israel. (3.) That from the killing of thirty-six men out of three thousand, when Israel made the former attack upon his city, he should infer the total routing of so great an army as now he had to deal with, *ver. 6.* They flee before us as at the first. See how the prosperity of fools destroys them, and hardens them to their ruin. God had made use of the men of Ai as a scourge to chastise his people for meddling with the accursed thing, and this had puffed them up with a conceit, that they must have the honour of delivering their country from these formidable invaders; but they were soon made to see their mistake, and that when the Israelites had reconciled themselves to their God they could have no power against them. God had made use of them only for the rebuking of Israel, with a purpose, when the correction was over, to throw the rod itself into the fire, *howbeit, they meant not so, but it was in their hearts to destroy and cut off*, *Ila. x. 5, 6, 7*.

4. What a complete victory Israel obtained over them by the favour and blessing of God. Each did their part, the divided forces of Israel by signals agreed on understood one another, and every thing succeeded according to the project; so that the men of Ai, then, when they were most confident of victory, found themselves furrounded, so that they had neither spirit to resist, nor room to fly, but were under a fatal necessity of yielding their lives to the destroyers: and now it is hard to say, whether the shouts of the men of Israel, or the shrieks of the men of Ai were the louder, but easy to imagine what terror and confusion they were filled with, when their

highest assurances sunk so suddenly into the heaviest despair. Note, The triumphing of the wicked is short, *Job* xx. 5. They are exalted for a little while, that their fall and ruin may be the sorer, *Job* xxiv. 24. See how easily, how quickly the scale turns against them that have not God on their side.

23. And the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua. 24. And it came to pass, when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness wherein they chased them, and when they were all fallen on the edge of the sword, until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned unto Ai, and smote it with the edge of the sword. 25. And so it was, that all that fell that day, both of men and women, were twelve thousand, even all the men of Ai. 26. For Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. 27. Only the cattle and the spoil of that city Israel took for a prey unto themselves, according unto the word of the LORD, which he commanded Joshua. 28. And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it an heap for ever, even a desolation unto this day. 29. And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until even-tide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcase down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones that remaineth unto this day.

We have here an account of the improvement which the Israelites made of their victory over Ai.

1. They put all to the sword, not only in the field, but in the city, man woman, and child, none of them remained, *ver.* 24. God, the righteous judge, had passed this sentence upon them for their wickedness, so that the Israelites were only the ministers of his justice, and the executioners of his doom. Once in this story, and but once, mention is made of the men of Beth-el, as confederates with the men of Ai, *ver.* 17. Though they had a king of their own, and were not subjects to the king of Ai, for the king of Beth-el is reckoned among the thirty-one kings that Joshua destroyed, *chap.* xii. 16. Yet Ai being a stronger place, they threw themselves into that for their own safety, and the strengthening of their neighbour's hands, and so (we may presume) were all cut off with them; thus, that by which they hoped to prevent their own ruin hastened it. The whole number of the slain it seems was but twelve thousand, an inconsiderable body to make head against all the thousands of Israel; but whom God will destroy he infatuates. Here it is said, *ver.* 26. that Joshua drew not his hand back wherewith he stretched out the spear, *ver.* 18. till the slaughter was completed. Some think the spear he stretched out was not to slay the enemies, but to animate and encourage his own soldiers, some flag or ensign being hung out at the end of this spear; and observe it as an instance of his self-denial, that though the fire of courage, wherewith his breast was filled, would have pushed him forward, sword in hand, into the hottest of the action, yet in obedience to God he kept the inferior post of standard-bearer, and did not quit it till the work was done. By the spear stretched out he directed the people to expect their help from God, and to him to give the praise.

2. They plundered the city and took all the spoil to themselves, *ver.* 27. Thus the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just; the spoil they brought out of Egypt, by borrowing of their neighbours, was much of it expended upon the tabernacle they had reared in the wilderness, for which they are now reimbursed with interest. The spoil here taken, it is probable, was all brought together, and distributed by Joshua in due proportions, as that of the Midianites was, *Numb.* xxxi. 26, &c. And it was not catch as catch could, for God is the God of order and equity, and not of confusion.

3. They laid the city in ashes, and left it to remain so, *ver.* 28. Israel must yet dwell in tents, and therefore this city as well as Jericho must be burnt. And though there was no curse entailed upon him that should rebuild it, yet it seems it was not rebuilt, unless it be the same with Aijah, which we read of long after, *Neh.* xi. 31. Some think it was not rebuilt, because Israel had received a defeat before it, the remembrance of which should be buried in the ruins of the city.

4. The king of Ai was taken prisoner and cut off, not by the sword of war, as a soldier, but by the sword of justice, as a malefactor. Joshua ordered him to be hanged, and his dead body thrown at the gate of his own city, under a heap of stones, *ver.* 23—29. Some particular reason, no doubt, there was for this severity against the king of Ai; it is likely he had been notoriously wicked and vile, and a blasphemer of the God of Israel, perhaps upon occasion of the repulse he had given to the forces of Israel in their first onset. Some observe, that his dead body was thrown at the gate where he had been wont to sit in judgment, that so much the greater contempt might thereby be poured upon the dignity he had been proud of, and he might be punished for the unrighteous decrees he had made in the very place where he had made them. Thus the Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth.

30. ¶ Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal. 31. As Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lift up any iron; and they offered thereon burnt-offerings, unto the LORD, and sacrificed peace-offerings. 32. And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel. 33. And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark, and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; half of them over-against mount Gerizzim, and half of them over-against mount Ebal: as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded. No. XXXIII.

commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. 34. And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. 35. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.

This religious solemnity which we have here an account of, comes in somewhat surprisingly in the midst of the history of the wars of Canaan. After the taking of Jericho and Ai, we would have expected that the next news should have been of their taking possession of the country, the pushing on of their victories in other cities, and the carrying of the war into the bowels of the nation, now they had made themselves masters of the frontier towns: But here the scene opens of quite another nature, the camp of Israel is drawn out into the field, not to engage the enemy, but to offer sacrifices, to hear the law read, and to say Amen to the blessings and curses. Some think this was not done till after some of the following victories were obtained, which we read of, *chap.* x. and xi. But it should seem by the maps, that Shechem (near to which these two mountains, Gerizzim and Ebal were) was not so far off from Ai, but that when they had taken that, they might penetrate into that country as far as these two mountains, and therefore I would not willingly admit a transposition of the story; and the rather, because as it comes in here, it is a remarkable instance, (1.) Of the zeal of Israel for the service of God and for his honour. Though never was war more honourable, more pleasant, or more gainful, nor ever was war more sure of victory, nor more necessary to a settlement; for they had neither houses nor lands of their own, till they had won them by the sword, no, not Joshua himself, yet all the business of the war shall stand still, while they make a long march to the place appointed, and there attend this solemnity. God appointed them to do this when they were got over Jordan, and they did it as soon as possibly they could, though they might have had a colourable pretence to put it off. Note, We must not think to defer our covenanting with God till we are settled in the world, nor must any business put us from minding and pursuing the one thing needful. The way to prosper is to begin with God, *Matth.* vi. 33. (2.) It is an instance of the care of God concerning his faithful servants and worshippers. Though they were in an enemy's country as yet unconquered, yet in the service of God they were safe, as Jacob, when in this very country he was going to Beth-el to pay his vows, the terror of God was upon the cities round about, *Gen.* xxxv. 5. Note, When we are in the way of duty God takes us under his special protection.

Twice Moses had given express orders for this solemnity; once, *Deut.* xi. 29, 30. where he seems to have pointed to the very place where it was to be performed; and again, *Deut.* xxvii. 2, &c. It was a federal transaction: the covenant was now removed between God and Israel upon their taking possession of the land of promise, that they might be encouraged in the conquest of it, and might know upon what terms they held it, and come under fresh obligations to obedience. In token of the covenant,

1. They built an altar, and offered sacrifice to God, *ver.* 30, 31. in token of their dedication of themselves to God, as living sacrifices to his honour, in and by a mediator, who is the altar that sanctifies this gift. This altar was erected on mount Ebal, the mount on which the curse was put, *Deut.* xi. 29. to signify that there, where by the law we had reason to expect a curse, by Christ's sacrifice of himself for us, and his mediation, we have peace with God; he has redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us, *Gal.* iii. 13. Even there where it was said, By the curse ye are not my people; there it is said, Through Christ the altar, ye are the children of the living God, *Hos.* i. 10. The curses pronounced on mount Ebal would immediately have been executed, if atonement had not been made by sacrifice.

By the sacrifices offered on this altar they did likewise give God the glory of the victories they had already obtained, as *Exod.* xvii. 15. Now they had had the comfort of them in the spoils of Ai, it was fit God should have the praise of them; and they also implored his favour for their future success; for supplications as well as thanksgivings were intended in their peace-offerings. The way to prosper in all that we put our hand unto, is to take God along with us, and in all our ways to acknowledge him by prayer, praise, and dependance.

This altar they built was of rough, unhewn stone, according to the law. *Exod.* xx. 25. For that which is most plain and natural, and least artful and affected in the worship of God, he is best pleased with. Man's device can add no beauty to God's institutions.

2. They received the law from God; and this they must do that would find favour with him, and expect to have the offerings accepted: for if we turn away our ear from hearing the law, our prayers will be an abomination. When God took Israel into covenant he gave them his law, and they, in token of their consent to the covenant, subjected themselves to the law. Now here,

1. The law of the ten commandments was written upon stones in the presence of all Israel, as an abridgement of the whole, *ver.* 32. This copy was not graven in the stone, as that which was reserved in the ark, that was to be done only by the finger of God: it is his prerogative to write the law in the heart, but the stones were plaistered, and it was written upon the plaister, *Deut.* xxi. 4—8. It was written that all might see what it was that they consented to, that it might be a standing remaining testimony to posterity, of God's goodness in giving them such good laws, and a testimony against them, if they were disobedient to them. It is a great mercy to any people to have the law of God in writing, and it is fit that the written law should be exposed to common view in an unknown tongue, that it may be seen and read of all men.

2. The blessings and the curses, the sanctions of the law, were publicly read, and the people (we may suppose) according to Moses's appointment said Amen to them, *ver.* 33, 34. The auditory was very large; (1.) The greatest prince was not excused, the elders, officers, and judges, are not above the cognizance of the law, but will come under the blessing or the curse, according as they are or are not obedient to it, and therefore they must be present to consent to the covenant, and to go before the people therein. (2.) The poorest stranger was not excluded; here was a general naturalization of them, as well the stranger as he that was born among them, was taken into covenant; this was an encouragement to proselytes, and a happy presage of the kindnesses intended for the poor Gentiles in the latter days.

The tribes were posted as Moses directed, six towards Gerizzim, and six towards Ebal. And the ark in the midst of the valley was between them, for it was the ark of the covenant; and, in it was shut up the close rolls of that law, which was copied out, and made patent upon the stones. The covenant was commanded, and the command covenanted. The priests that

attended the ark, or some of the Levites that attended them, after the people had all taken their places, and silence was proclaimed, pronounced distinctly the blessings and the curses, as Moses had drawn them up, to which the tribes said Amen; and yet it is here only said, that they should *bleſs the people*, for the blessing was that which was first and chiefly intended, and which God designed in giving the law. If they fell under the curse, that was their own fault. And it was really a blessing to the people that they had this matter laid so plainly before them, *Life and death, good and evil; he had not dealt ſo with other nations.*

3. The law itself, the precepts and prohibitions were also read, (ver. 35.) it should seem by Joshua himself, who did not think it below him to be a reader in the congregation of the Lord; in conformity to this example, the solemn reading of the law, which was appointed *once in seven years*, (Deut. xxxi. 11.) was performed by their king or chief magistrate. It is here intimated what a general publication of the law this was, (1.) Every word was read; even the minutest precepts were not omitted, nor the most copious abridged; not one iota or tittle of the law shall pass away, and therefore none was in reading skipped over, under pretence of straits of time, or that any part was needless or not proper to be read. It was not many weeks since Moses had preached the whole book of *Deuteronomy* to them, yet Joshua must now read it all over again: It is good to hear twice what God has spoken once, *Pſal. lxi. 11.* and to review what has been delivered to us, or to have it repeated, that we may not let it slip. (2.) Every Israelite was present, *even the women and the little ones*, that all might know and do their duty. Note, Masters of families should bring their wives and children with them to the solemn assemblies for religious worship. All that are capable of learning, must come to be *taught out of the law*. The strangers also attended with them; for wherever we are, though but as strangers, we should improve every opportunity, of acquainting ourselves with God and his holy will.

C H A P. IX.

Here is in this chapter, 1. The impolitic confederacy of the kings of Canaan against Israel, ver. 1, 2. 2. The politic confederacy of the inhabitants of Gibeon with Israel. 1. How it was subtilly proposed and petitioned for by the Gibeonites, pretending to come from a far country, ver. 3—13. 2. How it was unwarily consented to by Joshua, and the Israelites, to the disgust of the congregation when the fraud was discovered, ver. 14—18. 3. How the matter was adjusted to the satisfaction of all parties, by giving these Gibeonites their lives, because they had covenanted with them, yet depriving them of their liberties, because the covenant was not fairly obtained, ver. 19—27.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, when all the kings which were on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon, the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite heard thereof, 2. That they gathered themselves together to fight with Joshua, and with Israel, with one accord.

Hitherto the Canaanites had acted defensively, the Israelites were the aggressors upon Jericho and Ai, but here the kings of Canaan were in consultation to attack Israel, and concert matters for a vigorous effort of their united forces, to check the progress of their victorious arms. Now, (1.) It was strange that they did not do this sooner. They had notice long since of their approach; Israel's design upon Canaan was no secret; one would have expected that a prudent concern for their common safety should have put them upon taking some measures to oppose their coming over Jordan, and maintained that pass against them, or to have given them a warm reception as soon as they were over. It was strange they did not attempt to raise the siege of Jericho, or at least fall in with the men of Ai, when they had given them a defeat. But they were either through presumption or despair wonderfully belotted and at their wits end; many know not the things that belong to their peace till they are hid from their eyes. (2.) It was more strange that they did it now: Now the conquest of Jericho had given such a pregnant proof of God's power, and that of Ai of Israel's policy, one would have thought the end of their consultation should have been not to fight with Israel, but to make peace with them, and to gain the best terms they could for themselves. This had been their wisdom, *Luke xiv. 32.* but their minds were blinded, and their hearts hardened to their destruction.

Observe, 1. What induced them now at last to enter upon this consultation. When they heard thereof, ver. 1. not only of the conquest of Jericho and Ai, but of the convention of the states of mount Ebal, which we have an account of immediately before: when they heard that Joshua, as if he thought himself already complete master of the country, had had all his people together, and had read the laws to them, by which they must be governed, and taken their promises to submit to those laws, then they perceived the Israelites were in good earnest, and thought it was high time for them to bestir themselves. The pious devotion of God's people sometimes provokes and exasperates their enemies more than any thing else.

2. How unanimous they were in their resolves. Though they were many kings of different nations, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, &c. doubtless of different interests, and that had often been at variance with one another, yet determined with one mouth, *nemine contradicente*, to unite against Israel. O that Israel would learn this of Canaanites, to sacrifice private interests to the public welfare, and to lay aside all animosities among themselves, that they may cordially unite against the common enemies of God's kingdom among men!

3. And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho, and to Ai. 4. They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine-bottles, old, and rent, and bound up; 4. And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them, and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy. 6. And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us. 7. And the men of Israel

said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us, and how shall we make a league with you? 8. And they said unto Joshua, We are thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who are ye? and from whence come ye? 9. And they said unto him, from a very far country thy servants are come, because of the name for the LORD thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt. 10. And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that were beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which was at Ashtaroth. 11. Wherefore our elders, and all the inhabitants of our country, spake to us, saying, Take' victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We are your servants: therefore, now make ye a league with us. 12. This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses, on the day we come forth to go unto you; but now behold it is dry, and it is mouldy: 13. And these bottles of wine which we filled, were new, and behold they be rent, and these our garments and our shoes are become old, by reason of the very long journey. 14. And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD.

Here is, 1. The Gibeonites desire to make peace with Israel, being alarmed by the tidings they heard of the destruction of Jericho, ver. 3. Other people heard those tidings and were irritated thereby to make war upon Israel, but the Gibeonites heard them, and were induced to make peace with them. Thus the discovery of the glory and grace of God in the gospel, is to some a *favour of life unto life*; but to others a *favour of death unto death*, 2 Cor. ii. 16. The same sun softens wax and hardens clay. I do not remember that we read any where of a king in Gibeon: Had their government been at this time in a single person, perhaps his heart would have been too high to yield to Israel, but he would have joined with the rest of the kings against Israel. But these four united cities, mentioned ver. 17. seem to have been governed by elders, or senators, ver. 11. who consulted the common safety more than their own personal dignity. The inhabitants of Gibeon did well for themselves.

2. The method they took to compass it. They knew that all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan were to be cut off, perhaps they had some spies in the congregation at Ebal, when the law was read, who observed and brought them notice of the command given to Israel, *Deut. vii. 1, 2, 3.* that they should shew no mercy to the Canaanites, give them no quarter in battle, which made them afraid of fighting them, and that they should make no covenant with them, which made them despair of gaining any advantage by treating with them; and therefore there was no way of saving their lives from the sword of Israel, unless they could, by disguising themselves, make Joshua believe that they came from a very far country, which the Israelites were not commanded to make war upon, nor forbidden to make peace with, but were particularly appointed to offer peace to, *Deut. xx. 10—15.* Unless they be could admitted under this notion, they saw there was but one way with them, they must submit to the fate of Jericho and Ai. Though the neighbouring princes knew that all the men thereof were mighty, (chap. x. 2.) and they knew it themselves, yet they durst not contend with Israel, who had an almighty God on their side. This therefore is the only game they have to play, and they play it very artfully and successfully; never was any thing more craftily managed.

1. They come under the character of ambassadors from a foreign state, which they thought would please the princes of Israel, and make them proud of the honour of being courted by distant countries: we find Hezekiah fond of those that came to him from a far country, *Iſa. xxxix. 3.* they had not used to be thus courted.

2. They pretended to have undergone the fatigues of a very long journey, and produced what passed for an ocular demonstration of it. It should seem it was then usual for those that undertook long journeys to take with them, as we do now for long voyages, all manner of provision in kind, the country not being furnished as ours is now with houses of entertainment, for the convenience of which, when we have occasion to make use of them, we have reason to be very thankful. Now, they are pretended that their provision when they brought it from home was fresh and new, but it now appeared to be old and dry, whereas it might well be presumed they had not loitered but made the best of their way; so that from thence it must be inferred that they came, as they said they did, from a very far country, their sacks and portmanteaus were old, the wine all drank, and the bottles, in which it had been, broken, their shoes and clothes worn worse than the Israelites in forty years, their bread mouldy, ver. 4, 5, and again, ver. 12, 13. Thus God's Israel have often been deceived and imposed upon with a shew of antiquity. But (as Bishop Hall expresseth it) *errors are never the elder for their being patched*, and so seeming old: but they that will be caught with this Gibeonitish stratagem, it is a sign they have not consulted with God. And thus there are those who make themselves poor with the badges of want and distress, and yet have great riches, *Prov. xiii. 7.* or at least have no need of relief, by which fraud charity is misplaced, and hindered from those that are real objects of it.

3. When they were suspected, and more strictly examined from whence they came, they industriously declined telling the name of their country, till the agreement was settled; (1.) The men of Israel suspected a fraud, ver. 7. *peradventure you dwell among us*, and then we may not, we must not make any league with you: this might have discouraged the Gibeonites, from urging the matter any farther, concluding that if the peace were made, the Israelites would not think themselves obliged to keep it, having thus solemnly protested against it, in case they dwelt among them; but knowing that there was no hope at all if they stood it out, they bravely ventured a submission; who knows but the people of Israel may save them alive, though thus inveighed into a promise, and if they tell them at last, they shall but die. (2.) Joshua put the question to them, *Who are ye? and from whence come ye?* He finds himself concerned to stand upon his guard against secret fraud, as well as against open force; we in our spiritual warfare must stand against the wiles of the devil, remembering he is a subtil serpent as well as a roaring lion. In all leagues of relation and friendship we must first try, and then trust, lest we repent at leisure agreements made in haste. (3.) They would not tell whence they came; but are still in the same forg, *we are come from a very far country*, ver. 9. They will have it thought, that

that it is a country Israel knows nothing of, nor never heard of, and therefore would never be the wiser if they should tell him the name of it.

4. They profess a respect for the God of Israel, the more to ingratiate themselves with Joshua, and we charitably believe they were sincere in this profession, *we be come because of the name of the Lord thy God*, ver. 9. because of what we have heard of that name, which has convinced us that it is *above every name*, and because we have a desire towards that name, and the remembrance of it, and would gladly come under its protection.

5. They fetch their inducements from what had been done some time before in Moses's reign, the tidings whereof might easily be supposed ere this to have reached distant regions, the plagues of Egypt and the destruction of Sihon and Og, ver. 9, 10. but prudently say nothing of the destruction of Jericho and Ai, (though that was the true inducement, ver. 3.) because they will have it supposed that they came from home long before those conquests were made. We need not be long to seek for reasons why we should submit to the God of Israel, we may be furnished either with new or old, which we will.

6. They make a general submission, *We are your servants*, and humbly sue for a general agreement, *make a league with us*, ver. 11. They insist not upon terms, but will be glad of peace upon any terms; nor will the case admit of delays, lest the fraud be discovered; fain would they have the bargain struck up presently; if Joshua will but *make a league* with them, they have all they come for, and they hoped their ragged clothes and clouted shoes will be no exception against them; God and Israel reject none for their poverty.

Now, 1. Their falshood cannot be justified, nor ought it to be drawn into a precedent. We must not do evil that good may come. Had they owned their country but renounced the idolatries of it, resigned the possession of it to Israel, and themselves to the God of Israel, we have reason to think Joshua would have been directed by the oracle of God to spare their lives, and they needed not to have made these pretensions. It is observable, when they had once said, *we are come from a far country*, ver. 6. they found themselves necessitated to say it again, ver. 9. and to say what was utterly false concerning their bread, their bottles, their clothes, ver. 12, 13. for one lie is an inlet to another; and that to a third, and so on. The way of that sin is down-hill.

But, 2. Their faith and prudence is to be greatly commended; our Lord commended even the unjust steward, because he had done wisely and well for himself, Luke xvi. 8. In submitting to Israel they submitted to the God of Israel, which implied a renunciation of the god they had served, a resignation to the laws of the true religion. They had heard enough to convince them of the infinite power of the God of Israel, and from thence might infer his other perfections of wisdom and goodness; and how can we do better for ourselves, than *surrender at discretion* to infinite wisdom, and *cast ourselves upon the mercy* of a God of infinite goodness. The submission of these Gibeonites was the more laudable, because it was (1.) Singular; their neighbours took another course, and expected they would join with them. (2.) Speedy; they did not stay till Israel had besieged their cities, then it had been too late to capitulate, but when they were at some distance they desired conditions of peace. The way to avoid a judgment is to meet it by repentance. Let us imitate these Gibeonites, and *make our peace* with God in the rags of humiliation, godly sorrow, and mortification, so our iniquity shall not be our ruin. Let us be servants to Jesus, our blessed Joshua, and make league with him, and the Israel of God, and we shall live.

15. And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation swore unto them. 16. And it came to pass at the end of three days, after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they *were* their neighbours, and *that* they dwelt among them. 17. And the children of Israel journeyed, and came into their cities on the third day: now their cities *were* Gibeon, and Chephirah, and Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim. 18. And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: and all the congregation murmured against the princes. 19. But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them. 20. This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we swore unto them. 21. And the princes said unto them, Let them live, (but let them be hewers of wood, and drawers of water unto all the congregation) as the princes had promised them.

Here is, 1. The treaty soon concluded with the Gibeonites; ver. 14, 15. The thing was not done with much formality, but in short, (1.) They agreed to let them live, and more the Gibeonites did not ask. In a common war this had been but a small matter to be granted, but in the wars of Canaan, which were to make a general destruction, it was a great favour to a Canaanite, to have his *life given him for a prey*, Jer. xlv. 5. (2.) This agreement was made not by Joshua only, but by the princes of the congregation, in conjunction with him. Though Joshua had an extraordinary call to the government, and extraordinary qualifications for it, yet he would not act in an affair of this nature, without the counsel and concurrence of the princes, who were neither kept in the dark nor kept under foot, but were treated by him as sharers in the government. (3.) It was ratified by an oath, they swore unto them, not by any of the gods of Canaan, but by the God of Israel only, ver. 19. They that mean honestly do not startle at assurances, but satisfy those with whom they treat, and glorify God by calling him to witness to the sincerity of their intentions. (4.) Nothing appears to have been culpable in all this, but that it was done rashly; they took of their victuals, by which they satisfied themselves that it was indeed old and dry, but did not consider that that was no proof of their bringing it fresh from home; so that making use of their senses only, but not their reason, they received the men (as the margin reads it) because of their victuals, perceiving perhaps upon the view and taste of their bread, not only that now it was old, but that it had been fine and very good at first, whence they inferred that they were persons of some quality, and therefore the friendship of their country was not to be despised. But *they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord*, They had the Urim and Thummim with them, which they might have advised with in this difficult case, and that would have told them no lie, would have led them into no error, but they relied so much on their own politics,

that they thought it needless to bring the matter to the oracle. Joshua himself, was not altogether without blame herein. Note, We then make more haste than good speed in any business, when we stay not to take God along with us, and by the word and prayer to consult him. Many a time we see cause to reflect upon it with regret, that such and such an affair miscarried, because we *asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord*; would we acknowledge him in all our ways, we should find them more safe, easy, and successful.

2. The fraud soon discovered by which this league was procured. *A lying tongue is but for a moment*, and truth will be the daughter of time. Within three days they found, to their great surprise, that the cities which these ambassadors had treated for were very near them, but one night's foot-march from the camp at Gilgal, chap. x. 9. Either their own scouts, or the parties that sallied out to acquaint themselves with the country, or perhaps some deserters that came over to them from the enemy, informed them of the truth in this matter. They that suffer themselves to be deceived by the wiles of Satan, will soon be undeceived to their confusion, and will find that near, even at the door, which they imagined was very far off.

3. The disgust of the congregation at this. They did indeed submit to the restraints which this league laid upon them, and smote not the cities of the Gibeonites, neither slew the persons, nor seized the prey, but it vexed them to have their hands thus tied, and they *murmured against the princes*, (ver. 18.) it is to be feared more from a jealousy for their own profit, than from a zeal for the fulfilling of God's command, though some of them perhaps have a regard to that. Many are forward to arraign and censure the actions of princes while they are ignorant of the springs of those actions, and are incompetent judges of the reasons of state that govern them. While therefore we are satisfied in general that those who are over us aim at nothing but the public good, and sincerely seek the welfare of their people, we ought to make the best of what they do, and not exercise ourselves in things above us.

4. The prudent endeavour of the princes to pacify the discontented congregation, and to accommodate the matter; herein all the princes concurred and were unanimous, which doubtless disposed the people to acquiesce.

1. They resolved to spare the lives of the Gibeonites, for so they had expressly sworn to do, ver. 15. to let them live.

(1.) The oath was lawful, else it had not bound them, no more than Herod's oath bound him to cut off John Baptist's head; it is true God had appointed them to destroy all the Canaanites, but that law must be construed *in favourum vite*, to mean those only that stood it out, and would not surrender their country to them, and not to bind them so far to put off the sense of honour and humanity, as to slay those who had never lift up a hand against them, nor ever would, but before they were reduced to any extremity, or ever attempted any act of hostility, with one consent humbled themselves; the *kings of Israel were certainly more merciful kings than to do so*, 1 Kings xx. 31. and the God of Israel a more merciful God than to order so, *justis est prostrare leoni*. And besides, the reason of the law is the law; the mischief designed to be prevented by that law; was the infecting of the Israelites with their idolatry; Deut. vii. 4. But if the Gibeonites renounce their idolatry, and become friends and servants to the house of God, the danger is effectually prevented, the reason of the law ceaseth, and consequently the obligation of it, especially to a thing of this nature. The conversion of sinners shall prevent their ruin.

(2.) The oath being lawful, both the princes and the people for whom they transacted were bound by it, bound in conscience, bound in honour, in honour to the God of Israel, by whom they had sworn, and whose name would have been blasphemed by the Canaanites, if they had violated this oath. They spake as those that *feared an oath*, (Eccl. ix. 2.) when they argued thus: *We will let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we swear*, ver. 20. He that ratifies a promise with an oath, imprecates the divine vengeance if he wilfully break his promise, and has reason to expect that divine justice would take him at his word: God is not mocked, and therefore oaths are not to be jested with. The princes will keep their word, 1. Though they lost by it. *A covenant of Zion fears to his own hurt and changeth not*, Psal. cv. 4. Joshua and the princes, when they found it was to their prejudice that they had thus bound themselves, did not apply themselves to Eleazar for a dispensation, much less did they pretend that no faith is to be kept with heretics, with Canaanites, no, they were strangers to the modern artifices of the Roman Church, to elude the most sacred bonds and even to sanctify perjuries. Though the people were uneasy at it, and their discontent might have ended in a mutiny, yet the princes would not violate their engagement to the Gibeonites, we must never be over-awed either by majesty or multitude to do an ill thing, and go against our consciences. 3. Though they were drawn into this league by a wile, and might have had a very plausible pretence to declare it null and void, yet they adhered to it. They might have pleaded, though those were the men with whom they exchanged the ratifications, yet these were not the cities intended in the league; they had promised to spare certain cities without names that were far off, and upon the express consideration of their being so, but these were very near, and therefore not the cities that they covenanted with. And many learned men have thought, they were so grossly imposed upon by the Gibeonites, that it had been lawful to them to have recalled their promise, but that to preserve their reputation, and to keep up in Israel a veneration for an oath, they would stand to it; but it is plain they thought themselves indispensably obliged by it, and were apprehensive that the wrath of God would fall upon them if they broke it. And however their adherence to it might be displeasing to the congregation, it is plain it was acceptable to God, for when, in pursuance of this league, they undertook the protection of the Gibeonites, God gave them the most glorious victory that ever they had in all their wars, chap. x. and long after severely avenged the wrong Saul did to the Gibeonites in violation of this league, 2 Sam. xxi. 1. Let this convince us all how religiously we ought to perform our promises, and make good our bargains; and what conscience we ought to make of our words, when they are once given. If a covenant obtained by so many lies and deceits yet might not be broken, shall we think to evade the obligation of those that have been made with all possible honesty and fairness? If others' frauds will not justify or excuse our falshood, certainly others' honesty in dealing with us will aggravate and condemn our dishonesty in dealing with them.

2. Though they had spared their lives yet they seized their liberties, and sentenced them to be *hewers of wood, and drawers of water to the congregation*, ver. 21. By this proposal the discontented congregation was pacified; for (1.) They that were angry that the Gibeonites lived, might be content when they saw them condemned to that which in the opinion of sense is worse than death, perpetual servitude. (2.) They that were angry they were not spoiled, might be content when their service of the congregation would be more to their public advantage than their best effects could be; and, in short, the Israelites would be no losers either in honour or profit by this peace with the Gibeonites; convince them of this, and they will be satisfied.

22. ¶ And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We are very far from you; when ye dwell among us? 23. Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood, and drawers of water for the house of my God. 24. And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the LORD thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing. 25. And now behold, we are in thine hand; as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do. 26. And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not. 27. And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood, and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose.

The matter is here settled between Joshua and the Gibeonites, and an explanation of the league agreed upon; we may suppose that now, not the messengers that were first sent, but the elders of Gibeon, and of the cities that were dependent upon it, were themselves present, and treated with, that the matter might be fully comprised.

1. Joshua reproves them for their fraud, ver. 22. And they excuse it as well as they can, ver. 24. (1.) Joshua gives the reproof very mildly; wherefore have ye beguiled? He doth not load them with any ill names, doth not give them any harsh provoking language, doth not call them, as they deserved to be called, base liars, but only asks them, why have ye beguiled us? Under the greatest provocations it is our wisdom and duty to keep our temper, and to bridle our passion; a just cause needs not anger to defend it, and a bad one is made never the better by it. (2.) They make the best excuse for themselves, that the thing would bear, ver. 24. They found by the word of God that sentence of death was passed upon them, the command was to destroy all the inhabitants of the land, without exception; and they found by the works of God already wrought, that there was no opposing the execution of this sentence; they considered that God's sovereignty is incontestible, his justice inflexible, and his power irresistible, and therefore resolved to try what his mercy was, and found it was not in vain to cast themselves upon it. They do not go about to justify their lie, but in effect beg pardon for it, pleading it was purely to save their lives that they did it, which every man that finds in himself the force of the law of self-preservation will therefore make great allowances for; especially in such a case as this, where the fear was not merely of the power of man, (if that were all, one might flee from that to the divine protection,) but of the power of God himself, which they saw engaged against them.

2. Joshua condemns them to servitude, as a punishment of their fraud, ver. 23. and they submit to the sentence, ver. 25. and for ought appears both sides are pleased.

1. Joshua pronounceth them perpetual bondmen. They had purchased their lives with a lie, but that being no good consideration, he obligeth them to hold their lives under the rent and reservation of their continual labours, in hewing wood and drawing water, the meanest and most toilsome employment. Thus their lie was punished; had they dealt fairly and above-board with Israel, perhaps they had had more honourable conditions granted them; but now, since they gain their lives with ragged clothes and clouted shoes, the badges of servitude, they are condemned for ever to wear such, so must their doom be. And thus the ransom of their lives is paid; dominion is acquired by the preservation of a life that lies at mercy (*Servus dicitur a servando*) they owe their service to them to whom they owe their lives. Observe how the judgment is given against them. (1.) Their servitude is made a curse to them. Now ye are cursed with the ancient curse of Canaan, from whom these Hivites descended, *a servant of servants shalt thou be*, Gen. ix. 25. What shall be done to the false tongue but this? cursed shall it be. (2.) Yet this curse is turned into a blessing, they must be servants but it shall be for the house of my God. The princes would have them slaves unto all the congregation, ver. 21. at least they chose to express themselves so, for the pacifying of the people that were discontented; but Joshua mitigates the sentence, both in honour to God and in favour to the Gibeonites: it would be too hard upon them to make them every man's drudge; if they must be hewers of wood and drawers of water, than which there cannot be a greater disparagement, especially to them who were citizens of a royal city, and all mighty men, chap. x. 2. yet they shall be so to the house of my God, than which there cannot be a greater preferment: David himself could like to be a door-keeper there. Even servile work becomes honourable when it is done for the house of God and the offices thereof. (1.) They were hereby excluded from the liberties and privileges of true-born Israelites, and a remaining mark of distinction put upon their posterity throughout all their generations. (2.) They were hereby employed in such services as required their personal attendance upon the altar of God in the place which he should choose, ver. 27. which would bring them to the knowledge of the law of God, keep them tight to that holy religion to which they were profelyted, and prevent their revolt to the idolatries of their fathers. (3.) This would be a great advantage to the priests and Levites to have so many, and those mighty men, constant attendants upon them, and engaged by office to do all the drudgery of the tabernacle. A great deal of wood must be hewed for fuel for God's house, not only to keep the fire burning continually upon the altar, but to boil the flesh of the peace-offerings, &c. and a great deal of water drawn, for the divers washings which the law prescribed; these and other such servile works, such as washing the vessels, carrying out ashes, sweeping the courts, &c. which otherwise the Levites must have done themselves, these Gibeonites were appointed to do. (4.) They were herein servants to the congregation too; for whatever promotes and helps forward the worship of God, is real service to the commonwealth. It is the interest of every Israelite that the altar of God be well attended. Hereby all the congregation was excused from much of this servile work, which perhaps would otherwise have been expected from some of them. God had made a law that the Israelites should never make any of their brethren bondmen, if they had slaves they must be of the heathen that were round about them, Lev. xxv. 44. Now in honour of this law, and of Israel that was honoured by it, God would not have the drudgery, no, not of the tabernacle itself, to be done by Israelites, but by Gibeonites, who were afterwards called Nethinim, men given to the Le-

vites, as they were to the priests, (*Numb. iii. 9.*) to minister to them in the service of God. (5.) This may be looked upon as typifying the admission of the Gentiles into the Gospel Church. Now they were taken in upon their submission to be under-officers, but afterwards God promiseth that he will take of them for priests and Levites, Isa. lxvi. 21.

2. They submit to this condition, ver. 25. as conscious of a fault in framing a lie whereby to deceive the Israelites, and sensible also how narrowly they escaped with their lives, and what a kindness it was to have them spared, they acquiesce in the proposal, *do as it seemeth right unto thee*. Better live in servitude, especially such servitude, than not live at all. Those of the very meanest and most despicable condition are described to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, Deut. xxix. 11. But skin for skin, liberty and labour, and all that a man has will he give for his life, and no ill bargain. Accordingly the matter was determined, (1.) Joshua delivered them out of the hands of the Israelites, that they should not be slain, ver. 26. It seems there were those who would have fallen upon them with the sword, if Joshua had not interposed with his authority; but wise generals know when to lock up the sword as well as when to draw it. (2.) He then delivered them again into the hands of the Israelites to be enslaved, ver. 27. They were not to keep possession of their cities, for we find afterwards that three of them fell to the lot of Benjamin, and one to that of Judah; nor were they themselves to be at their own dispose, but, as Bishop Patrick thinks, were dispersed into the cities of the priests and Levites, and came up with them in their courses to serve at the altar, out of the profits of which, it is probable, they were maintained. And thus Israel's bondmen became the Lord's freemen, for his service in the meanest office is liberty, and his work is its own wages. And this they got by their early submission. Let us, in like manner, submit to our Lord Jesus, and refer ourselves to him, saying, *We are in thy hand, do unto us as seemeth good and right unto thee*; only save our souls, and we shall not repent it: if he appoint us to bear his cross, and draw in his yoke, and servant at his altar, that shall be afterwards neither shame nor grief to us, while the meanest office in God's service will intitle us to a dwelling in the house of the Lord all the days of our life.

C H A P. X.

We have in this chapter an account of the conquest of the kings and kingdoms of the southern part of the land of Canaan, as in the next chapter of the reduction of the northern parts, which together completed the glorious successes of the wars of Canaan. In this chapter we have an account, 1. Of the routing of their forces in the field. In which observe, (1.) Their confederacy against the Gibeonites, ver. 1—5. (2.) The Gibeonites request to Joshua to assist them, ver. 6. (3.) Joshua's speedy march under divine encouragement for their relief, ver. 7—9. (4.) The defeat of the armies of these confederate kings, ver. 10, 11. (5.) The miraculous prolonging of the day by the standing still of the sun in favour of the conquerors, ver. 12—14. 2. Of the execution of the kings that escaped out of the battle, ver. 15—27. 3. Of the taking of the particular cities, and the total destruction of all that were found in them. Makkedah, ver. 28. Libnah, ver. 29, 30. Lachish, ver. 31, 32. and the king of Gezer that attempted its rescue, ver. 33. Eglon, ver. 34, 35. Hebron, ver. 36, 37. Debir, ver. 38, 39. And the bringing of all that country into the hands of Israel, ver. 40—42. And lastly, the return of the army to their head-quarters.

1. NOW it came to pass, when Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it, (as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai and her king) and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, and were among them; 2. That they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty. 3. Wherefore Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem, sent unto Hoham king of Hebron, and unto Piram king of Jarmuth, and unto Japhia king of Lachish, and unto Debir king of Eglon, saying, 4. Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon; for it hath made peace with Joshua, and with the children of Israel. 5. Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it. 6. ¶ And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua, to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants: come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains, are gathered together against us.

Joshua and the hosts of Israel had now been a good while in the land of Canaan, and no great matters were effected; they were made masters of Jericho by miracle, of Ai by stratagem, and of Gibeon by surrender, and that was all; hitherto the progress of their victories hath not seemed proportionable to the magnificence of their entry and the glory of their beginnings. Those among them that were impatient of delays, it is probable, complained of Joshua's slowness, and asked why they did not immediately penetrate into the heart of the country, before the enemy could rally their forces to make head against them; why they stood trilling, which they were so confident both of their title and of their success: Thus Joshua's prudence, perhaps, was censured as slothfulness, cowardice, and want of spirit. But, 1. Canaan was not to be conquered in a day. God had said, that by little and little he would drive out the Canaanites, Exod. xxiii. 30. He that believeth will not make haste, or conclude that the promise will never be performed, because it is not performed so soon as was expected. 2. Joshua waited for the Canaanites to be the aggressors; let them first make an onset upon Israel, or the allies of Israel, and then their destruction will be, or at least will appear to be, the more just and the more justifiable. Joshua had warrant suf-

sufficient to set upon them, yet he slays till they strike the first stroke, that he might provide for honest things, not only in the sight of God, but of men: and they would be the more inexcusable in their resistance, now they had seen what favour the Gibeonites found with Israel. 3. It was for the advantage of Israel to sit still a while, that the forces of these little kings might unite in one body, and so might the easier be cut off at one blow. This God had in his eye, when he put it into their hearts to combine against Israel, though they designed thereby to strengthen one another, that which he intended was, to gather them as sheaves into the floor, to fall together under the flail, *Mic. iv. 12.* Thus oftentimes that seeming paradox proves wholesome counsel, *stay a while and we shall have done the sooner.*

After Israel had waited a while for an occasion to make war upon the Canaanites, a fair one offers itself.

1. Five kings combine against the Gibeonites; Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem was the first mover and ringleader of this confederacy. He had a good name, it signifies lord of righteousness, a descendant perhaps from Melchizedek, king of righteousness; but notwithstanding the goodness of his name and family, it seems he was an ill man, and an implacable enemy to the posterity of that Abraham, whom his predecessor, Melchizedek, was such a faithful friend to. He called upon his neighbours to join against Israel, either because he was the most honourable prince, and had the precedency among these kings, perhaps they had some dependence upon him, at least they paid a deference to him, as the most public, powerful, and active man they had among them: He, it seems, was first or most apprehensive of the danger, his country was in, not only by the conquest of Jericho and Ai, but the surrender of Gibeon, which it seems was the chief thing that alarmed him, it being one of the most considerable frontier towns they had. Against Gibeon therefore all the force he could raise must be levelled, *Come, faith he, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon.* This he resolves to do, either, (1.) In policy, that he might retake the city, because it was a strong city, and of mighty consequence to his country in whose hands it was. Or, (2.) In passion, that he might chastise the citizens for making peace with Joshua, pretending that they had perfidiously betrayed their country, and strengthened the common enemy, whereas, they had really done the greatest kindness imaginable to their country, by setting them a good example, if they would have followed it. Thus Satan and his instruments make war upon those that make peace with God: *marvel not if the world hate you;* and treat those as deserters who are converts to Christ.

2. The Gibeonites send notice to Joshua of the distress and danger they were in, *ver. 6.* Now they expect benefit by the league they had made with Israel, because though it was obtained by deceit, it was afterwards confirmed when the truth came out. They think Joshua obliged to help them, (1.) In conscience, because they were his servants, not in compliment, as they had said in their first address, *chap. ix. 8. We are thy servants,* but in reality made servants to the congregation, and it is the duty of masters to take care of the poorest and meanest of their servants, and not to see them wronged when it is in the power of their hands to right them. They that pay allegiance may reasonably expect protection. Thus David pleads with God, *Psal. cxix. 94. I am thine, save me;* and so may we, if indeed we be his. (2.) In honour, because the ground of their enemies' quarrel with them was the respect they had shewn to Israel, and the confidence they had in covenant with them. Joshua cannot refuse to help them, when it is for their affection to him, and to the name of his God, that they are attacked. David thinks it a good plea with God, *Psal. lxxix. 7. For thy sake I have borne reproach.* When our spiritual enemies set themselves in array against us, and threaten to swallow us up, let us, by faith and prayer, apply ourselves to Christ, our Joshua, for strength and succour, as St. Paul did, and we shall receive the same answer of peace, *my grace is sufficient for thee,* 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

7. So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour. 8. And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear them not; for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee. 9. Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night. 10. And the LORD discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Beth-horon, and smote them to Azekah; and unto Makkedah. 11. And it came to pass as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Beth-horon, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: *they were more which died with hail stones, than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.* 12. ¶ Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel: and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. 13. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. *Is not this written in the book of Jasher?* so the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. 14. And there was no day like that, before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel.

Here, 1. Joshua resolves to assist the Gibeonites, and God encourageth him in that resolve. (1.) He ascended from Gilgal, *ver. 7. i. e.* he designed, determined, and prepared for this expedition to relieve Gibeon, for it is probable it was before he stirred a step that God spake to him to encourage him. It was generous and just in Joshua to help his new allies, though perhaps the king of Jerusalem, when he attacked them, little thought that Joshua would have been so ready to help them, but expected he would abandon them as Canaanites, the rather because they had obtained their league with him by fraud, therefore he speaks with assurance, *ver. 4. of smiting Gibeon.* But Joshua knew that his promise to let them live obliged him, not only not to slay them himself, but not to stand by and see them slain, when it was in the power of his hand to prevent it, *Prov. xxiv. 11, 12.* He knew that when they embraced the faith and worship of the God of Israel, they came to *trust under the shadow of his wings,* (Ruth ii. 13.) and therefore, No. XXXIII.

as his servant, he was bound to protect them. (2.) God animated him for his undertaking, *ver. 8. Fear not, i. e.* 1. Doubt not of the goodness of thy cause, and the clearness of thy call; though it be to assist the Gibeonites, thou art in the way of duty, and God is with thee of a truth. 2. Dread not the power of the enemy; though so many kings are confederate against thee, and are resolved to make their utmost efforts for the reduction of Gibeon, and it may be will fight desperately in a desperate cause; yet let not that discourage thee, *I have delivered them into thine hand,* and those can make neither resistance nor escape, whom God has marked for destruction.

2. Joshua applies himself to execute this resolve, and God assists him in the execution. Here we have,

1. The great industry of Joshua, and the power of God working with that for the defeat of the enemy. In this action,

(1.) Joshua shewed his good-will in the haste he made for the relief of Gibeon, *ver. 9. He came unto them suddenly,* for the extremity was such as would not admit delay. If one of the tribes of Israel had been in danger, he could not have shewed more care or zeal for its relief than here for Gibeon, remembering in this, as in other cases, there must be one law for the stranger that was persecuted, and for him that was born in the land. Scarce had the confederate princes got their forces together, and sat down before Gibeon, but Joshua was upon them, the surprise of which would put them into the greatest confusion. Now the enemy were actually drawn up into a body, which had all as it were but one neck, dispatch was now as serviceable to his cause, as before delay was, while he waited for this general rendezvous; and now things were ripe for execution, no man more expeditious than Joshua, who before had seemed slow: Now, *it shall never be said he left that to be done to-morrow, which he could do to-day.* When Joshua found he could not reach Gibeon in a day, lest he should lose any real advantages against the enemy, or so much as seem to come short, or to neglect his new allies, he marched all night, resolving not to give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eye-lids, till he had accomplished this enterprise. It was well the forces he took with him were mighty men of valour, not only able-bodied men, but men of spirit and resolution, and hearty in the cause, else they neither could nor would have borne this fatigue, but would have murmured at their leader, and would have asked, Is this the rest we were promised in Canaan? But they well considered that the present toil was in order to a happy settlement, and therefore were reconciled to it. Let the good soldiers of Jesus Christ learn from hence to endure hardness in following the Lamb whithersoever he goes, and not think themselves undone if their religion lose them now and then a night's sleep, it will be enough to rest when we come to heaven.

But what needed Joshua to put himself and his men so much to the stretch? Had not God promised him, that without fail he would deliver the enemies into his hand? It is true he had; but God's promises are intended not to slacken and supersede, but to quicken and encourage our endeavours. *He that believeth doth not make haste to anticipate providence, but doth make haste to attend it, with a diligent, not distrustful speed.*

(2.) God shewed his great power in defeating the enemies which Joshua so vigorously attacked, *ver. 10, 11.* Joshua had a very numerous and powerful army with him, hands enough to dispatch a dispirited enemy, so that the enemy might have been scattered by the ordinary fate of war, but God himself would appear in this great and decisive battle, and draw up the artillery of heaven against the Canaanites, to demonstrate to his people, that they got not this land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them, but God's right hand and his arm, *Psal. xlv. 3. The Lord discomfited them before Israel,* Israel did what they could and yet God did all. (1.) It must needs be a very great confusion and terror to the enemy, to perceive that heaven itself fought against them, for who can contest with, flee from, or fence against, the powers of heaven? They had affronted the true God, and robbed him of his honour, by worshipping the host of heaven, giving that worship to the creature which is due to the Creator only, and now the host of heaven fights against them, and even that part of the creation which they had idolized is at war with them, and even triumphs in their ruin, *Jer. viii. 2.* There is no way of making any creature propitious to us, no not by sacrifice or offering, but only by making our peace with God, and keeping ourselves in his love. This had been enough to make them an easy prey to the victorious Israelites, yet this was not all. (2.) Besides the terror struck upon them, there was a great slaughter made of them by hail stones, which were so large and came down with such a force, that more were killed by the hail-stones than by the sword of the Israelites, though no doubt they were busy: God himself speaks to Job of treasures, or magazines of snow and hail, which he has reserved for the day of battle and war, *Job xxxviii. 22, 23.* and here they are made use of to destroy the Canaanites. Here was hail-shot from God's great ordnance, that against whomsoever it was directed, was sure to hit, and never glanced upon the Israelites mixed with them, and whenever it hit was sure to kill. See how miserable they are that have God their enemy, and how sure to perish; *it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands,* for there is no fleeing out of them. Some observe, that Beth-horon lay north of Gibeon. Azekah and Mak-kedah lay south, so that they fled each way; but which way soever they fled, the hail-stones pursued them, and met them at every turn.

2. The great faith of Joshua and the power of God crowning that with the miraculous rest of the sun, that the day of Israel's victories might be prolonged, and so the enemy totally defeated. The hail-stones had their rise no higher than the clouds, but to shew that Israel's help came from above the clouds, the sun itself, who, by his constant motion serves the whole earth, by halting when there was occasion, served the Israelites and did them a kindness; *the sun and moon stood still in their habitation, at the light of thine arrows which gave the signal,* *Hab. iii. 11.*

1. Here is the prayer of Joshua that the sun might stand still. I call it his prayer, because it is said, *ver. 12. he spake to the Lord,* as Elijah; though we read, 1 Kings xvii. 1. only of his prophesying of the drought, yet it is said, *James v. 17. to pray for it.* Observe, 1. An instance of Joshua's unwearied activity in the service of God and Israel, that though he had marched all night and fought all day, and one would expect should have a mind to repose himself and get a little sleep, and give his army some time to rest, that, like the hireling, he would earnestly have desired the shadow, and bid the night welcome, when he had done such a good day's work, yet instead of that he wishes for nothing so much as the prolonging of the day. Note, Those that wait on the Lord, and work for him, shall renew their strength, shall run and not be weary, shall walk and not faint, *Isa. xl. 31.* 2. An instance of his great faith in the almighty power of God, as above the power of nature, and able to controul and alter the usual course of it. No doubt Joshua had an extraordinary impulse or impression upon his spirit, which he knew to be of divine original, prompting him to desire that this miracle might be wrought upon this occasion, else it had been presumption in him to desire or expect it; the prayer had not been granted by the divine power, if it had not been dictated by the divine grace. God wrought this faith in him, and then said, *according to thy faith,* and thy prayer of faith, be it unto thee. It cannot be imagined how ever such a thing as this should enter into his mind, if God had not put it there; a man would have had a

thousand projects in his head for the completing of the victory, before he would have thought of desiring the sun to stand still; but even in the Old Testament saints the spirit made intercession according to the will of God; what God will give, he inclines the hearts of his praying people to ask, and for what he will do he will be enquired of, *Ezek. xxxiv. 37.*

Now, (1.) It looked great for Joshua to say, *Sun, stand thou still.* His ancestor Joseph had indeed dreamed that the sun and moon did obedience to him, but who would have thought that after it had been fulfilled in the figure, it should be again fulfilled in the letter to one of his posterity. The prayer is thus expressed with authority, because it was not an ordinary prayer, such as is directed and supported only by God's common providence or promise, but the prayer of a prophet at this time divinely inspired for this purpose, and yet intimates to us the prevalence of prayer, in general, so far as it is regulated by the word of God, and may mind us of that honour put upon prayer, *Isa. xlv. 11. Concerning the works of my hands, command ye me.* He bids the sun stand still upon Gibeon, the place of action and feat of the war, intimating, that what he designed in this request was the advantage of Israel against their enemies; it is probable the sun was now declining, and that he called for the lengthening out of the day, not till he observed its hastening towards its period. He doth likewise in the name of the King of kings, arrest the moon, perhaps because it was requisite for the preserving of the harmony and good order of the spheres, that the course of the rest of the heavenly bodies should be stayed likewise, otherwise while the sun shone he needed not the moon; and here he mentions the valley of Ajalon, which was near to Gibeon, because there he was at that time.

(2.) It was bold indeed to say so before Israel, and argues a very strong assurance of faith. If the event had not answered the demand, nothing could have been a greater slur upon him: the Israelites would have concluded he was certainly going mad, or he had never talked so extravagantly. But he knew very well that God would own and answer a petition which he himself directed to be drawn up and presented, and therefore was not afraid to say before all Israel, calling them to observe this work of wonder, *Sun, stand thou still,* for he was sure in whom he had trusted. He believed the almighty power of God, else he could not have expected that the sun going on its strength, driving in a full career, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race, should be stopped in an instant. He believed the sovereignty of God in the kingdom of nature, else he could not have expected that the established law and course of nature should be changed and interrupted, the ordinances of heaven, and the constant usage according to these ordinances broken in upon. And he believed God's particular favour to Israel above all people under the sun, else he could not have expected that, to favour them upon an emergency with a double day, he should (which must follow of course) annul and terrify so great a part of the terrestrial globe with a double night at the same time; it is true he caused the sun to shine upon the just and the unjust, but for this once the unjust shall wait for it beyond the usual time, while in favour to righteous Israel it stands still.

2. The wonderful answer to this prayer. No sooner said but done, *ver. 13. The sun stood still, and the moon stayed.* Notwithstanding the vast distance between the earth and the sun, at the word of Joshua the sun stopped immediately, for the same God that rules in heaven above, rules at the same time on this earth, and when he pleases, even the heavens shall hear the earth, as here. Concerning this great miracle, it is here said, (1.) That it continued a whole day, i.e. the sun continued as long again above the horizon, as otherwise it would have done. It is commonly supposed to have been about the middle of summer that this happened, when in that country it was about fourteen hours between sun and sun, so that this day was about twenty-eight hours long; yet if we suppose it to have been at that time of the year when the days are at the shortest, it will be the more probable that Joshua should desire and pray for the prolonging of the day. (2.) That hereby the people had full time to *avenge themselves of their enemies*, and to give them a total defeat. We often read in history of battles which the night put an end to, the shadows of which favoured the retreat of the conquered; to prevent this advantage to the enemy in their flight the day was doubled, that the hand of Israel might find out all their enemies: but the eye and hand of God can find them out without the help of the sun's light, for to him the night shineth as the day, *Psal. cxxxix. 12.* Note, Sometimes God completes a great salvation in a little time, and makes but one day's work of it. Perhaps this miracle is alluded to, *Zech. xiv. 6, 7.* where the day of God's fighting against the nations is said to be one day, and that at evening time it shall be light, as here. And, (3.) That there was never any day like it, before or since, in which God put such an honour upon faith, and prayer, and Israel's cause; never did he so wonderfully comply with the request of a man, nor so wonderfully fight for his people. (4.) This is said to be written in the book of Jasher, a collection of state poems, in which the poem made upon this occasion was preserved among the rest; probably, the same with that book of the wars of the Lord, *Numb. xxi. 14.* which afterwards was continued and carried on by one Jasher. Those words, *Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou moon in the valley of Ajalon,* founding metrical, are supposed to be taken from the narrative of this event, as it was found in the book of Jasher. Not that the divine testimony of the book of Joshua needed confirmation from the book of Jasher, a human compoſure; but to those who had that book in their hands, it would be of use to compare this history with it; which warrants the appeals the learned make to profane history for the corroborating of the proofs of the truth of sacred history.

But surely this stupendous miracle of the standing still of the sun, was intended for something more than merely to give Israel so much the more time to find out and kill their enemies, which without this might have been done the next day. (1.) God would hereby magnify Joshua, chap. iii. 7. as a particular favourite, as one whom he did delight to honour; being a type of him who hath all power both in heaven and in earth, and whom the winds and the seas obey. (2.) He would hereby notify to all the world what he was doing for his people Israel here in Canaan, the sun, the eye of the world, must be fixed for some hours upon Gibeon, and the valley of Ajalon, as it were to contemplate the great works of God there for Israel, and so to engage the children of men to look that way, and to enquire of this wonder done in the land, (2 Chron. xxxii. 31.) Proclamation was hereby made to all the neighbour nations, *Come, behold the works of the Lord,* *Psal. xlv. 8.* and say, *What nation is there so great as Israel is, who has God so nigh unto them?* One would have thought this would bring such real ambassadors as the Gibeonites pretended to be from a very far country, to court the friendship of Israel because of the name of the Lord their God: (3.) He would hereby convince and confound those idolaters that worshipped the sun and moon, and gave divine honours to them, by demonstrating that they were subject to the command of the God of Israel, and that as high as they were he was above them; and thus he would fortify his people against temptations to this idolatry, which he foresaw they would be addicted to, (*Deut. iv. 19.*) and which notwithstanding this they afterwards corrupted themselves with. (4.) This miracle signified (it is the learned Bishop Pierſon's notion) that in the latter days, when the light of the world was

tending towards a night of darkness, the sun of righteousness, even our Joshua, should arise, (*Mal. iv. 2.*) give check to the approaching night, and be the true light. To which let me add, that when Christ conquered our spiritual enemies upon the cross, the miracle wrought on the sun was the reverse of this, it was then darkened as if it were gone down at noon, for Christ needed not the light of the sun to carry on his victories, he then made darkness his pavilion; and lastly, the arresting of the sun and moon in this day of battle, figured the turning of the sun into darkness and the moon into blood in the last great and terrible day of the Lord.

15. ¶ And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal. 16. But these five kings fled, and hid themselves in the cave of Makkedah. 17. And it was told Joshua, saying, the five kings are found hid in a cave at Makkedah. 18. And Joshua said, Roll great stones upon the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for to keep them. 19. And stay ye not, but pursue after your enemies, and smite the hindmost of them, suffer them not to enter into their cities: for the LORD your God hath delivered them into your hand. 20. And it came to pass, when Joshua and the children of Israel had made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter till they were consumed, that the rest which remained of them entered into fenced cities. 21. And all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace: none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel. 22. Then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave. 23. And they did so, and brought forth those five kings unto him out of the cave, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon. 24. And it came to pass when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war, which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them. 25. And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight. 26. And afterward Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanging upon the trees until the evening. 27. And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave's mouth, which remain unto this very day.

It was a brave appearance, no doubt, which the five kings made when they took the field, for the reducing of Gibeon, and a brave army they had following them; but they were all routed, put into disorder first, and then brought to destruction by the hail-stones. And now Joshua thought, his work being done, he might go with his army into quarters of refreshment: accordingly it was resolved, perhaps in a council of war, that they should presently return to the camp at Gilgal, *ver. 15.* till they should receive orders from God to take possession of the country they had now conquered; but he soon finds he has more work cut out for him, the victory must be pursued that the spoils might be divided. Accordingly he applies himself to it with renewed vigour.

1. The forces that had dispersed themselves must be followed and smitten. When tidings were brought to Joshua where the kings were, he ordered a guard to be set upon them for the present, *ver. 18. referring them for another day of destruction*, and to be brought forth to a day of wrath, *Job xxi. 30.* And orders his men to pursue the common soldiers as much as might be, to prevent their escaping to the garriſons, which would strengthen them, and make the reduction of them the more difficult, *ver. 19.* Like a prudent general he doth that first which is most needful, and desers his triumphs till he has completed his conquests: nor was he in such haste to insult over the captive kings, but that he would first prevent the rallying again of their scattered forces. The success of this rigorous pursuit was, (1.) That a very great slaughter was made of the enemies of God and Israel. And (2.) The field was cleared of them, so that none remained but such as got into fenced cities, where they would not long be safe themselves, nor were they capable of doing any service to the cities that sheltered them, unless they could have left their fears behind them. (3.) None moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel, *ver. 21.* This expression intimates, 1. Their perfect safety and tranquillity; some think it should be read, from *Exod. xi. 7. Against any of the children of Israel did not a dog move his tongue*: no, not against any one man of them. They were not threatened by any danger at all after their victory, no, not so much as the barking of a dog. Not one single Israelite (for the original makes it so particular) was brought into any distress, either in the battle or in the pursuit. 2. Their honour and reputation, no man had any reproach to cast upon them, or an ill word to give them. God not only tied the hands but stopped the mouths of their enraged enemies, and put lying lips to silence. 3. The Chaldee paraphrase makes it an expression of their unallayed joy for this victory, reading it, *there was no hurt or loss to the children of Israel, for which any man should afflict his soul.* When the army came to be reviewed after the battle, there was none slain, none wounded, none missing, not one Israelite had occasion to lament either the loss of a friend, or the loss of a limb. So cheap, so easy, so glorious was this victory.

2. The kings that had hid themselves must now be called to an account, as rebels against the Israel of God, to whom, by the divine promise and grant, this land did of right belong, and should have been surrendered upon demand.

See here, (1.) How they were secured. The cave which they fled to, and trusted in for refuge, became their prison, in which they were clapped up, till Joshua set in judgment on them, *ver. 18.* It seems they all escaped both

both the hail-stones and the sword, God so ordering it, not in kindness to them, but that they might be reserved for a more solemn and terrible execution, as for this cause Pharaoh survived the plagues of Egypt, and was made to stand, that God might in him *show his power*, Exod. ix. 16. They all fled, and met at the same place, providence directing them; and now they who were lately consulting against Israel, were put upon new counsels to preserve themselves, and agreed to take shelter in the same cave. The information brought to Joshua of this is an evidence, that there were those of the country who knew the holes and fastnesses of it that were in his interests. And the care Joshua took to keep them there when they were there, it is an instance of his policy and presence of mind, even in the heat of action, for in the success of their project, it shows how they not only deceive themselves, but destroy themselves, who think to hide themselves from God. Their refuge of lies will but bind them over to God's judgment.

(2.) How they were triumphed over. Joshua ordered them to be brought forth out of the cave, set before him as at the bar, and their names called over, *ver. 22, 23.* And when they either were bound and cast upon the ground, unable to help themselves, or threw themselves upon the ground, humbly to beg for their lives, he called for the general officers and great men, and commanded them to trample upon these kings, and set their feet upon their necks; not in sport, and to make themselves and the company merry, but with the gravity and decorum that became the ministers of the divine justice, who were not herein to gratify any pride or passion of their own, but to give glory to the God of Israel as higher than the highest, who *treads upon princes as mortar.* (Isa. xli. 25.) and is *terrible to the kings of the earth*, Psal. lxxiv. 12. The thing doth indeed look barbarous, thus to insult over men in misery, that were suddenly fallen from the highest pitch of honour into this disgrace; it was hard for crowned heads to be thus trodden upon, not by Joshua himself, that might better have been borne, at least not by him only, but by all the captains in the army; certainly it ought not to be drawn into a precedent; for the case was extraordinary, and we have reason to think it was by the divine direction and impulse that Joshua did this. (1.) God would hereby punish the abominable wickedness of these kings, the measure of whose iniquity was now full. And by this public act of justice done upon these ringleaders of the Canaanites in sin, he would possess his people with the greater dread and detestation of those sins of the nations that God cast out from before them, which they would be tempted to imitate. (2.) He would hereby have the promise by Moses made good, (*Deut. xxxiii. 29.*) *Thou shalt tread upon their high places*; i. e. their great men, which should the rather be speedily fulfilled in the latter, because they are the very last words of Moses that we find upon record. (3.) He would hereby encourage the faith and hope of his people Israel, in reference to the wars that were yet before them. Therefore Joshua saith, *ver. 25, Fear not, nor be dismayed.*

(1.) Fear not these kings, or any of theirs, as if there were any danger of having this affront now put upon them in after-time revenged upon themselves; a consideration which keeps many from being insolent towards those they have at their mercy, because they know not how soon the uncertain fate of war may turn the same wheel upon themselves; but you need not fear that any should rise up ever to revenge this quarrel.

(2.) Fear not any other kings, who may at any time be in confederacy against you, for you see these brought down, whom you thought formidable. *Thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies*; now they begin to fall, to fall so low that you may set your feet on their necks, you may be confident they shall not prevail, but shall *surely fall before you*, Esth. vi. 13. (4.) He would hereby give a type and figure of Christ's victories over the powers of darkness, and believers victories through him. All the enemies of the Redeemer shall be made his footstool, Psal. cx. 1. (And see *Psal. xviii. 40.*) *The kings of the earth set themselves against him*, *Psal. ii. 2.* but sooner or later we shall see all things put under him, *Heb. ii. 8.* and *principalities and powers* made a show of, *Col. ii. 15.* And in these triumphs we are more than conquerors, may *tread upon the lion and adder*, Psal. xci. 13. may *ride on the high places of the earth*, Isa. lvii. 14. and may be confident that *the God of peace shall tread Satan under our feet*, shall do it shortly, and do it effectually, *Rom. xvi. 20.* See *Psal. cxlix. 8, 9.*

(3.) How they were put to death. Perhaps when they had undergone that terrible mortification of being trodden upon by the captains of Israel, they were ready to say, as Agag, *surely the bitterness of death is past*, and that *sufficient unto them was this punishment which was inflicted by many*, but their honours cannot excuse their lives, their forfeited devoted lives. Joshua smote them with the sword, and then hanged up their bodies till evening, when they were taken down, and thrown into the cave in which they had hid themselves, *ver. 26, 27.* That which they thought would have been their shelter was made their prison first, and then their grave; so shall we be disappointed in that which we flee to from God, yet to good people the grave is still a *hiding place*, Job xiv. 13. If these five kings had humbled themselves in time, and had begged peace instead of waging war, they might have saved their lives, but now the decree was gone forth, and they found no place for repentance, or the reversal of the judgment, it was too late to expect it, though perhaps they fought it *carefully with tears.*

28. ¶ And that day Joshua took Makkedah, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof he utterly destroyed, them, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain: and he did unto the king of Makkedah, as he did unto the king of Jericho. 29. Then Joshua passed from Makkedah and all Israel with him, unto Libnah, and fought against Libnah. 30. And the LORD delivered it also, and the king thereof, into the hand of Israel, and he smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein: he let none remain in it; but did unto the king thereof, as he did unto the king of Jericho. 31. ¶ And Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, unto Lachish, and encamped against it and fought against it. 32. And the LORD delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel, which took it on the second day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein, according to all that he had done to Libnah. 33. ¶ Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish: and Joshua smote

him and his people until he had left him none remaining. 34. ¶ And from Lachish, Joshua passed unto Eglon, and all Israel with him, and they encamped against it, and fought against it. 35. And they took it on that day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein he utterly destroyed that day, according to all that he had done to Lachish. 36. And Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, unto Hebron, and they fought against it. 37. And they took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof, and all the souls that were therein: he left none remaining (according to all that he had done to Eglon) but destroyed it utterly, and all the souls that were therein. 38. ¶ And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him to Debir, and fought against it. 39. And he took it, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof, and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all the souls that were therein, he left none remaining: as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir, and to the king thereof, as he had done also to Libnah and to her king. 40. ¶ So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel commanded. 41. And Joshua smote them from Kadeshbarnea, even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon. 42. And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel. 43. And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal.

We have here Joshua's improvement of the late glorious victory he had obtained, and the advantages he had gained by it; and to do this well is a general praise,

1. Here is a particular account of the several cities which he immediately made himself master of. (1.) The cities of three of the kings whom he had conquered in the field: he went and took possession of Lachish, *ver. 31, 32.* Eglon, *ver. 34, 35.* and Hebron, *ver. 36, 37.* The other two Jerusalem and Jarmuth, were not taken at this time; perhaps his forces were either so much fatigued with what they had done, or so well content with what they had got, that they had no mind to attack those places, and so they slipped the fairest opportunity they could ever expect of reducing them with ease, which afterwards was not done without difficulty, *Judg. i. 8.* 2 *Sam. v. 6.* (2.) Three other cities, and royal cities too, he took; Makkedah, into the neighbourhood of which the five kings were fled, which brought Joshua and his forces thither in pursuit of them, and so hastened its ruin, *ver. 28.* Libnah, *ver. 29, 30.* and Debir, *ver. 38, 39.* (3.) One king that brought in his forces for the relief of Lachish, that had lost its king, proved, to meddle to his own hurt, it was Horam king of Gezer, who either in friendship to his neighbours, or for his own security, offered to stop the progress of Joshua's arms, and was cut off with all his forces. Thus wicked men are often snared in their counsels, and by opposing God in the way of his judgments, bring them the sooner on their own heads.

2. A general account of the country which was hereby reduced and brought into Israel's hands, *ver. 40, 41, 42.* That part of the land of Canaan they first got possession of which lay south of Jerusalem, and afterwards fell most of it to the lot of the tribe of Judah.

Observe in this narrative, (1.) The great speed Joshua made in taking these cities, which some think is intimated in the manner of relating it, which is quick and concise. He flew like lightning from place to place; and though they all stood it out to the last extremity, and none of these cities opened their gates to him, yet in a little time he got them all into his hands, summoned them and seized them the same day, *ver. 28.* or in two days, *ver. 32.* Now they were struck with fear by the defeat of their armies, and the death of their kings, Joshua prudently followed his blow. See what a great deal of work may be done in a little time, if we will be but busy, and improve our opportunities. (2.) The great severity Joshua used towards those he conquered. He gave no quarter to man, woman, or child, put to the sword *all the souls*, *ver. 28, 30, 32, 35, &c.* *utterly destroyed all that breathed*, *ver. 40.* and *left none remaining.* Nothing could justify this military execution, but that therein they did as the Lord God of Israel commanded, *ver. 40.* which was sufficient not only to bear them out, and save them from the imputation of cruelty, but to sanctify what they did, and make it an acceptable piece of service to his justice. God would hereby, (1.) Manifest his hatred of the idolatries, and other abominations which the Canaanites had been guilty of, and leave us to judge how great the provocation was which they had given him, by the greatness of the destruction which was brought upon them when the measure of their iniquity was full. (2.) He would hereby magnify his love to his people Israel, in giving so many men for them, and people for their life, Isa. xliii. 4. when the heathen are to be cast out to make room for this vine, (Psal. lxxx. 8.) Divine justice appears more prodigal than ever of human blood, that the Israelites might find themselves for ever obliged to spend their lives to the glory of that God who had sacrificed so many of the lives of his creatures to their interest. (3.) Hereby was typified the final and eternal destruction of all the impotent implacable enemies of the Lord Jesus, that having slighted the riches of his grace, must for ever feel the weight of his wrath; and shall have judgment without mercy. Nations that forget God shall be turned into hell, and no reproach at all to God's infinite goodness. (3.) The great success of this expedition. The spoil of these cities was now divided among the men of war that plundered them; and the cities themselves with the land about them, were shortly to be divided among the tribes, for the Lord fought for Israel, *ver. 42.* They could not have got the victory, if God had not undertaken the battle: then we conquer when God fights for us; and if he be for us, who can be against us?

C H A P. XI.

This chapter continues and concludes the history of the conquests of Canaan; the southern part of it we had an account of the reduction of, in the foregoing chapter; after which we may suppose Joshua allowed his forces some breathing time; now here we have the story of the war in the north, and the happy success of that war. 1. The confederacy of the northern croens against Israel, ver. 1—5. 2. The encouragement which God gave to Joshua to engage them, ver. 6. 3. His victory over them, ver. 7—9. 4. The taking of the cities, ver. 10—15. 5. The destruction of the Anakims, ver. 21, 22. 6. The general conclusion of the story of this war, ver. 16—20, 23.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor had heard *those things*, that he sent to Joab king of Madon, and to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Achshaph; 2. And to the kings that were on the north of the mountains, and of the plains south of Chinneroth, and in the valley, and in the borders of Dor, on the west: 3. And to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and to the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the mountains, and to the Hivite under Hermon, in the land of Mizpeh. 4. And they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many. 5. And when all these kings were met together, they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel. 6. ¶ And the LORD said unto Joshua, Be not afraid because of them: for to-morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire. 7. So Joshua came, and all the people of war with him, against them by the waters of Merom suddenly, and they fell upon them, 8. And the LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them unto great Zidon, and unto Misrephoth-maim, and unto the valley of Mizpeh eastward; and they smote them, until they left them none remaining. 9. And Joshua did unto them as the LORD bade him: he houghed their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire.

We are here entering upon the story of another campaign that Joshua made, and it was a glorious one; no less illustrious than the former in the success of it, though in respect of miracles, it was inferior to it in glory. The wonders God then wrought for them, were to animate and encourage them to act vigorously themselves. Thus the war carried on by the preaching of the Gospel against Satan's kingdom, was at first forwarded by miracles, but the war being by them sufficiently proved to be of God, the managers of it are now left to the ordinary assistances of divine grace in the use of the sword of the Spirit, and must not expect hail-stones, or the standing still of the sun.

In this story we have,

1. The Canaanites taking the field against Israel. They were the aggressors, God's hardening their hearts to begin the war, that Israel might be justified beyond exception in destroying them. Joshua and all Israel were returned to the camp at Gilgal, and perhaps these kings knew no other but that they intended to sit down content with the conquest they had already made, and yet prepare war against them. Note, Sinners bring ruin upon their own heads, so that God will be justified when he speaks, and they alone shall bear the blame for ever. Judah was now couched as a lion gone up from the prey, if the northern kings rouse him up it is at their peril, Gen. xlv. 9.

Now, (1.) Several nations joined in this confederacy, some in the mountains, and some in the plains, ver. 2. Canaanites from the east and west, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, &c. ver. 3. of different constitutions, and divided interests among themselves, and yet they here unite against Israel, as against a common enemy. Thus are the children of this world more unanimous, and therein wiser than the children of light. The oneness of the Church's enemies should shame the Church's friends out of their discords and divisions, and engage them to be one. (2.) The head of this confederacy was Jabin the king of Hazor, ver. 1. as Adoni-zedek was of the former; it is said, ver. 10. Hazor had been the head of all those kingdoms, which could not have revolted, but there must be some remaining grudge among them, that was forgotten and laid aside upon this occasion, by consent of parties, Luke xxiii. 12. (1.) When they had all drawn up their forces together, every kingdom bringing in its quota, they were a very great army, much greater than the former, as the sand on the sea-shore in multitudes, and upon this account much stronger and more formidable, that they had horses and chariots very many, which we do not find the southern kings had; hereby they had a great advantage against Israel, for their army consisted only of foot, and they never brought either horses or chariots into the field. Josephus tells us, that the army of the Canaanites consisted of three hundred thousand foot, ten thousand horse, and twenty thousand chariots. Many there be that rise up against God's Israel; doubtless their numbers made them very confident of success, but it proved that so much the greater slaughter was made of them.

2. The encouragement God gave to Joshua to give them the meeting, even upon the ground of their own choosing, ver. 6. Be not afraid because of them. Joshua was remarkable for his courage, it was his master's grace, and yet it seems he had need to be again and again cautioned not to be afraid. Fresh dangers and difficulties make it necessary to fetch in fresh supports and comforts from the word of God, which we have always nigh unto us, to be made use of in every time of need. Those that have God on their side, need not be disturbed at the number and power of their enemies; more are they that are with us, than they that are against us; they have the hosts of the Lord that have the Lord of hosts engaged for them. For his encouragement. 1. God assures him of success, and fixes the hour: to-morrow about this time, when an engagement (it is probable) was expected and designed on both sides, I will deliver them up slain. Though they were

to be slain by the sword of Israel, yet it is spoken of as God's work, that he would deliver them up. 2. He appoints him to hough their horses, hamstring them, lame them, and burn their chariots, not only that Israel might not use them hereafter, but that they might not fear them now, their God designed this contempt to be put upon them. Let Israel look upon their chariots but as rotten wood designed for the fire, and their horses of war as disabled things, scarce good enough for the cart.

This encouragement which God gave here to Joshua, no doubt, he communicated to the people, who perhaps were under some apprehensions of danger from this vast army, notwithstanding the experience they had of God's power engaged for them. And the wisdom and goodness of God is to be observed, (1.) In insinuating the counsels of the enemy, that all the kings of Canaan, who were not dispersed at such a distance from each other but that they might have got altogether in a body, did not at first confederate against Israel, but were divided into the southern and northern combination, and so became the less formidable. And (2.) In preparing his people to encounter the greater force, by breaking the less. They first engage with five kings together, and now with many more. God proportions our trials to our strength, and our strength to our trials.

3. Joshua's march against these confederate forces, ver. 7. He came upon them suddenly, and surprised them in their quarters. He made this haste, (1.) That he might put them into the greater confusion, by giving them an alarm, when they little thought they had been near them. (2.) That he might be sure not to come short of the honour God had fixed, to give him the meeting at the enemies camp, to-morrow about this time. It is fit we should keep time with God.

4. His success, ver. 8. He obtained the honour and advantage of a complete victory; he smote them and chased them, in the several ways they took in their flight; some fled towards Zidon, which lay to the north-west, others towards Mizpeh, eastward, but the parties Joshua sent out, pursued them each way. So the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel; they would not deliver themselves into the hands of Israel to be made proselytes, and tributaries, and so offered up to God's grace, Rom. xv. 16. and therefore God delivered them into their hands to be made sacrifices to his justice, for God will be honoured by us or upon us.

5. His obedience to orders given him, in destroying the horses and chariots, ver. 9. which was an instance, (1.) Of his subjection to the divine will, as one under authority, that must do as he is bidden. (2.) Of his self-denial, and crossing his own genius and inclination in complying with God's command. (3.) Of his confidence in the power of God engaged for Israel, which enabled them to despise the chariots and horses which others trusted in, Psal. xx. 7.—xxxiii. 17. (4.) Of his care to keep up in the people the like confidence in God, by taking that from them which they would be tempted to trust too much to. This was cutting off a right hand.

10. ¶ And Joshua at that time turned back, and took Hazor, and smote the king thereof with the sword; for Hazor beforetime was the head of all those kingdoms. 11. And they smote all the souls that were therein with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them: there was not any left to breathe; and he burnt Hazor with fire. 12. And all the cities of those kings, and all the kings of them did Joshua take, and smote them with the edge of the sword, and he utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the LORD commanded. 13. But as for the cities that stood still in their strength, Israel burned none of them, save Hazor only: that did Joshua burn. 14. And all the spoil of these cities, and the cattle, the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves: but every man they smote with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them, neither left they any to breathe.

We have here the same improvement made of this victory, that was of that in the foregoing chapter.

1. The destruction of Hazor is particularly recorded, because in it, and by the king thereof, this daring design against Israel was laid, ver. 10, 11. The king of Hazor it seems escaped with his life out of the battle, and thought himself safe when he was got back into his own city, and Joshua was gone in pursuit of the scattered troops another way, but it proved that that which he thought would have been for his welfare was his trap, in it he was taken as in an evil net there he was slain, and his city for his sake burnt. Yet we find that the remains of it being not well looked after by Israel, the Canaanites rebuilt it, and settled there under another king of the same name, Judg. iv. 2.

2. The rest of the cities of that part of the country are spoken of only in general; that Joshua got them all into his hands, but did not burn them as he did Hazor, for Israel was to dwell in great and goodly cities which they builded not, Deut. vi. 10. and in these among the rest. And here we find Israel rolling in blood and treasure. (1.) In the blood of their enemies, they smote all the souls, ver. 11. neither left they any to breathe, ver. 14. that there might be none to infect them with the abominations of Canaan, and none to disturb them in the possession of it. The children were cut off, lest they should afterwards lay claim to any part of this land in the right of their parents. (2.) In the wealth of their enemies. The spoil, and the cattle they took for a prey to themselves, ver. 14. As they were enriched with the spoil of their oppressors when they came out of Egypt, wherewith to defray the charges of their apprenticeship in the wilderness; so they were enriched with the spoils of their enemies, for a stock wherewith to set up in the land of Canaan. Thus is the wealth of the sinner laid up for the just.

15. ¶ As the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua: he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses. 16. So Joshua took all that land, the hills, and all the south country, and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same: 17. Even from the mount Hailak, that goeth up to Seir, even unto Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon, unto mount Hermon: and all their kings he took, and smote them, and slew them. 18. Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. 19. There

19. There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon: all other they took in battle. 20. For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses. 21. ¶ And at that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakims from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel: Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities. 22. There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel: only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod there remained. 23. So Joshua took the whole land according to all that the LORD said unto Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel, according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war.

We have here the conclusion of this whole matter.

1. A short account is here given of what was done in four things. (1.) The obstinacy of the Canaanites in their opposition to the Israelites. It was strange, that though it appeared so manifestly that God fought for Israel, and in every engagement the Canaanites went by the worst, yet they stood it out to the last; not one city made peace with Israel, but the Gibeonites only, who understood the things that belonged to their peace better than their neighbours; ver. 19. It is intimated that other cities might have made as good terms for themselves without ragged clothes, and clouted shoes, if they would have humbled themselves, but they never so much as desired conditions of peace. We are told whence this unaccountable infatuation came. *It was of the Lord, to harden their hearts*, ver. 20. As Pharaoh's heart was hardened by his own pride and wilfulness first, and afterwards by the righteous judgment of God, to his destruction, so were the hearts of these Canaanites. To punish them for all their other follies, God left them to this, to make those their enemies whom they might have made their friends. This was it that ruined them, they came against Israel in battle, and gave the first blow, and therefore might have no favour shewed them. Those know not what they do who give the provocation to divine justice, or the authorized instruments of it. *Are we stronger than God?* Observe here, that hardness of heart is the ruin of sinners. Those that are stupid and secure, and heedless of divine warnings, are already marked for destruction. What hope is there of those concerning whom God has said, *Go, make their hearts fat?* (2.) The constancy of the Israelites in prosecuting this war, ver. 18. *Joshua made war a long time*, some reckoned it five years, others seven, that were spent in subduing this land. So long God would train up Israel to war, and give them repeated instances of his power and goodness in every new victory that he gave them. (3.) The conquest of the Anakims at last, ver. 21, 22. Either this was done as they met with them where they were dispersed, as some think, or rather it should seem the Anakims were retired to their fastnesses, and so were hunted out, and cut off at last, after all the rest of their enemies. The mountains of Judah and Israel were the habitations of those mountains of men; but neither their height, nor the strength of their caves, nor the difficulty of the passes to them, could secure, no not these mighty men from the sword of Joshua. The cutting off of the sons of Anak is particularly mentioned, because these had been such a terror to the spies forty years before, and their bulk and strength had been thought an insuperable difficulty in the way of reducing of Canaan, *Numb. xiii. 23, 33*. Even that opposition which seemed invincible was got over. Never let the sons of Anak be a terror to the Israel of God, for even *their day will come to full*. Giants are dwarfs to omnipotence, yet this struggle with the Anakims was reserved for the latter end of the war, when the Israelites were become more expert in the arts of war, and had had more experience of the power and goodness of God. Note, God sometimes reserves the sharpest trials of his people by affliction and temptation of the latter end of their days. Therefore let not him that girdeth on the harness boast as he that puts it off. Death is the last enemy that is to be encountered, but it is to be destroyed, 1 Cor. xv. 26. and it is a son of Anak, thanks be to God, who will give us the victory. (4.) The end and issue of this long war. The Canaanites were rooted out, not perfectly (as we shall find after in the book of Judges) but in a good measure, they were not able to make any head, either, 1. So as to keep the Israelites out of possession of the land, *Joshua took all the land*, ver. 16, 17. And we may suppose the people dispersed themselves and their families into the countries they had conquered, at least those that lay nearest to the head quarters of Gilgal, until an orderly distribution should be made by lot, that every man might know his own. Or, 2. So as to keep them in action, or give them any molestation, ver. 23. *The land rested from war*. It ended not in peace with the Canaanites, that was forbidden, but in a peace from them. There is a rest, a rest from war, remaining for the people of God, into which they shall enter when their warfare is accomplished.

2. That which was now done, if here compared with that which had been said to Moses; God's word and his works, if viewed and considered together, will mutually illustrate each other. It is here observed in the close,

1. That all the precepts God had given to Moses relating to the conquest of Canaan, were obeyed on the peoples part, at least, while Joshua lived. See how solemnly this is remarked, ver. 15. *As the Lord commanded Moses his servant*, by whose hand the law was given, *so did Moses command Joshua*, for Moses was faithful, as a law-giver, to him that appointed him, he did his part, and then he died; but were the commands of Moses observed when he was in his grave? yes, they were, *so did Joshua*, who was in his place as faithful, as Moses in his, *He left nothing undone* (Heb. he removed nothing) of all that the Lord commanded Moses. They that leave their duty undone, do what they can to remove or make void the command of God, by which they are obliged to it, but Joshua by performing the precept confirmed it, as the expression is, *Deut. xxvii. 26*. Joshua was himself a great commander, and yet nothing was more his praise than his obedience. They that rule others at their will, must themselves be ruled by the divine will, then their power is indeed their honour, and not otherwise. The pious obedience for which Joshua is here commended, respects especially the command to destroy the Canaanites, and to break down their altar, and burn their images, *Deut. vii. 2—5*. *Exod. xxiii. 21—xxxiv. 13*. Joshua in his zeal for the Lord of hosts, spared neither the idols nor the idolaters. Saul's disobedience, or rather his partial obedience, to the command of God, for the utter destruction of the Amalekites, cost him his kingdom. It should seem Joshua doth himself give this account of his most careful and punctual

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observance of his orders in the execution of his commission, that in all respects he had done as Moses commanded him; and then it intimates, that he had more pleasure and satisfaction in reflecting upon his obedience to the commands of God in all this war, and valued himself more by that, than by all the gains and triumphs with which he was enriched and advanced.

2. That all the promises God had given to Moses relating to this conquest, were accomplished on his part, ver. 23. *Joshua took the whole land*, conquered it, and took possession of it, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses. God had promised to drive out the nations before them, *Exod. xxxiii. 29, 30*, and to bring them down, *Deut. ix. 3*. And now it was done. There failed not one word of the promise. Our successes and enjoyments are then doubly sweet and comfortable to us, when we see them flowing to us from the promise; this is according to what the Lord said; as our obedience is then acceptable to God, when it has an eye to the precept. And if we make conscience of our duty, we need not question the performance of the promise.

C H A P. XII.

This chapter is a summary of Israel's conquests, 1. Their conquests under Moses, on the other side Jordan, (for we now suppose ourselves in Canaan) eastward, which we had the history of, Numb. xxi. 21. And here the abridgment of that history, ver. 1—6. 2. Their conquests under Joshua, on this side Jordan, westward, (1.) The country they reduced, ver. 7, 8. (2.) The kings they subdued, thirty-one in all, ver. 9—34. And this comes in here, not only as a conclusion of the history of the wars of Canaan, that we might at one view see what they had got, but as a preface to the history of the dividing of Canaan, that all that might be put together which they were now to make a distribution of.

1. **N**OW these are the kings of the land, which the children of Israel smote, and possessed their land on the other side Jordan, towards the rising of the sun: from the river Arnon, unto mount Hermon, and all the plain on the east. 2. Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, and ruled from Aroer, which is upon the bank of the river Arnon, and from the middle of the river, and from half Gilead even unto the river Jabbok, which is the border of the children of Ammon: 3. And from the plain to the sea of Cinneroth on the east, and unto the sea of the plain, even the salt-sea on the east, the way to Beth-jeshimoth: and from the south, under Ashdodth-pisgah. 4. And the coast of Og king of Bashan, which was of the remnant of the giants, that dwelt at Ashtaroth, and at Edrei. 5. And reigned in mount Hermon, and in Sulcah, and in all Bashan, unto the border of the Gethurites, and the Maachathites, and half Gilead, the border of Sihon king of Heshbon. 6. Them did Moses the servant of the LORD, and the children of Israel smite, and Moses the servant of the LORD gave it for a possession unto the Reubenites, and Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh.

Joshua, or whoever else is the historian, before he comes to sum up the new conquests Israel had made, in these verses recites their former conquests in Moses's time, under whom they became masters of the great and potent kingdoms of Sihon and Og. Note, Fresh mercies must not drown the remembrance of former mercies, nor must the glory of the present instruments of good to the Church, be suffered to eclipse and diminish the just honour of those that have gone before them, and were the blessings and ornaments of their day. Joshua's services and achievements are confessedly great, but let not those under Moses be overlooked and forgotten, since God was the same who wrought both, and both put together proclaim him the alpha and omega of Israel's great salvation. Here is,

1. A description of this conquered country, the metes and bounds of it in general, ver. 1. *From the river Arnon in the south to mount Hermon in the north*: In particular, here is a description of the kingdom of Sihon, ver. 2, 3. and that of Og, ver. 4, 5. Moses had described this country very particularly, *Deut. ii. 36—iii. 4, &c.* and this description here agrees with his. King Og is said to dwell at Ashtaroth and Edrei, ver. 4. probably because they were both his royal cities, he had palaces in both, and resided sometimes in one, and sometimes in the other; one perhaps was his summer seat, and the other his winter seat; but Israel took both from him, and made one grave to serve him, that could not be content with one palace.

2. The distribution of this country; Moses assigned it to the two tribes and a half at their request, and divided it among them, ver. 6. of which we had the story at large, *Numb. xxxii*. The dividing of it when it was conquered by Moses, is here spoken as an example to Joshua, what he must do now when he had conquered the country on this side Jordan. Moses in his time gave one part of Israel a very rich and fruitful country, but it was on the outside of Jordan, but Joshua gave to all Israel the holy land, the mountain of God's sanctuary, within Jordan; so the law conferred upon some few of God's spiritual Israel, external temporal blessings, which were earnest of good things to come. But the Lord Jesus, the true Joshua, had provided for all the children of promise spiritual blessings, the privileges of the sanctuary and the heavenly Canaan. The triumphs and grants of the Law were glorious, but those of the gospel far exceeded in glory.

7. ¶ And these are the kings of the country which Joshua and the children of Israel smote on this side Jordan on the west, from Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon, even unto the mount Halak, that goeth up to Scir, which Joshua gave unto the tribes of Israel for a possession, according to their divisions: 8. In the mountains, and in the valleys, and in the plains, and in the springs, and in the wilderness, and in the south-

country: the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9. ¶ The king of Jericho, one: the king of Ai, which is beside Beth-el, one: 10. The king of Jerusalem, one: the king of Hebron, one: 11. The king of Jarmuth, one: the king of Lachish, one: 12. The king of Eglon, one: the king of Gezer, one: 13. The king of Debir, one: the king of Geder, one: 14. The king of Hormah, one: the king of Arad, one: 15. The king of Libnah, one: the king of Adullam, one: 16. The king of Mak-kedah, one: the king of Beth-el, one: 17. The king of Tappuah, one: the king of Hephher one: 18. The king of Aphek, one: the king of Lasharon, one: 19. The king of Madon, one: the king of Hazor, one: 20. The king of Shimron-meron, one: the king of Achishaph, one: 21. The king of Taanack, one: the king of Megiddo, one: 22. The king of Kedesh, one: the king of Jokneam of Carmel, one: 23. The king of Dor, in the coast of Dor, one: the king of the nations of Gilgal, one: 24. The king of Tirzah, one: all the kings thirty and one.

We have here a breviate of Joshua's conquests. 1. The limits of the country he conquered; it lay between Jordan on the east, and the Mediterranean sea on the west, and extended from Baal-gad near Lebanon in the north, to Halak, which lay upon the country of Edom in the south, *ver.* 7. The boundaries are more largely described, *Numb.* xxxiv. 2, &c. only this here is enough to shew that God had been as good as his word, and had give them possession of all he had promised them by Moses, if they would but have kept it.

2. The various kinds of land that were found in this country, which contributed both to its pleasantness and to its fruitfulness, *ver.* 8. There were mountains, not craggy and rocky and barren, which are frightful to the traveller, and useless to the inhabitants, but fruitful hills, such as put forth precious things, *Deut.* xxxiii. 15. which charmed the spectator's eye, and filled the owner's hand. And vallies not mossy and boggy, but covered with corn, *Psal.* lxxv. 13. There were plains, and springs to water them; and even in that rich land there were wildernesses too, or forests, which were not so thick inhabited as other parts, yet had towns and houses in them, but served as soils to set off the more pleasant and fruitful countries.

3. The several nations that had been in possession of this country, Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, &c. all of them descended from Canaan, the accursed son of Ham, *Gen.* x. 15—18. Seven nations they are called, *Deut.* vii. 1. and so many are there reckoned up, but here six only are mentioned, the Girgashites being here either lost or left out; though we find them, *Gen.* x. 16. and xv. 21. Either they were incorporated with some other of these nations, or, as the tradition of the Jews is, upon the approach of Israel under Joshua, they all withdrew and went into Africa, leaving their country to be possessed by Israel, with whom they saw it was to no purpose to contend, and therefore they are not named among the nations that Joshua subdued.

A list of the kings that were conquered and subdued by the sword of Israel, some in the field, others in their own cities. Thirty-one in all, and very particularly named and counted, it should seem, in the order in which they were conquered; for the catalogue begins with the kings of Jericho and Ai, then the king of Jerusalem, and the princes of the south, that were in confederacy with him, and then proceeds to those of the northern association. Now,

1. This shews what a very fruitful country Canaan then was, which could subsist so many kingdoms; and in which so many kings chose to throng together, rather than disperse themselves into other countries, which we may suppose not yet inhabited, but where, though they might find more room, they could not expect such plenty and pleasure: this was the land God spied out for Israel; and yet at this day it is one of the most barren, despicable, and unprofitable countries in the world; such is the effect of the curse it lies under, since its possessors rejected Christ and his Gospel, as was foretold by Moses, *Deut.* xxix. 13.

2. It shews what narrow limits men's ambition was then confined to. These kings contented themselves with the government each of them of one city, and the towns and villages that pertained to it, and no one of them for aught appears aimed to make himself master of the rest: but when there was occasion united for the common safety. Yet it should seem that what was wanting in the extent of their territories was made up in the absoluteness of their power, their subjects being all their tenants and vassals, and entirely at their command.

3. It shews how good God was to Israel, in giving them victory over all these kings, and possession of all these kingdoms, and what obligations he hereby laid upon them to observe his statutes, and to keep his laws, *Psal.* cv. 44, 45. Here were thirty-one kingdoms, or feignories, to be divided among nine tribes and a half of Israel. Of these there fell to the lot of Judah, the kingdom of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon, Debir, Arad, Libnah, and Adullam, eight in all, besides part of the kingdom of Jerusalem, and part of Geder. Benjamin had the kingdom of Jericho, Ai, Jerusalem, Mak-kedah, Beth-el, and the nations of Gilgal, six in all. Simeon had the kingdom of Hormah, and part of Geder. Ephraim had the kingdom of Gezer and Tirzah. Manasseh (that half-tribe) had the kingdoms of Tappuah and Hephher, Taanack and Megiddo. Asher had the kingdom of Aphek and Achishaph. Zebulun had the kingdom of Lasharon, Shimron-meron and Jokneam. Naphthali had the kingdom of Madon, Hazor, and Kedesh. And Issachar had that of Dor. These were some of the great and famous kings that God smote, for his mercy endureth for ever; and gave their land for an heritage; even a heritage unto Israel his servant, for his mercy endureth for ever, *Psal.* cxxxvi. 17, &c.

C H A P. XIII.

At this chapter begins the account of the dividing of the land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel by lot; a narrative not so entertaining and instructive as that of the conquest of it, and yet it is thought fit to be inserted in the sacred history, to illustrate the performance of the promise made to the fathers, that this land should be given to the seed of Jacob, to them and not to any other. The preserving of this distribution would be of great

use to the Jewish nation, who were obliged by the law to keep up this first distribution, and not to transfer inheritances from tribe to tribe, *Numb.* xxxvi. 9. It is likewise of use to us for explaining of other scriptures: the learned know how much light the geographical description of a country gives to the history of it. And therefore we are not to skip over these chapters of hard names, as useless and not to be regarded; where God has a mouth to speak, and a hand to write, we should find an ear to hear, and an eye to read, and God give us a heart to profit? In this chapter God informs Joshua what parts of the country that were intended in the grant to Israel, yet remained unconquered, and not got in possession, *ver.* 1—6. 2. He appoints him notwithstanding to make a distribution of what was conquered, *ver.* 7. 3. To complete this account here is a repetition of the distribution Moses had made of the land on the other side Jordan; in general, *ver.* 8—14. In particular the lot of Reuben, *ver.* 15—23. Of Gad, *ver.* 24—28. Of the half tribe of Manasseh, *ver.* 29—33.

1. NOW Joshua was old and stricken in years: and the LORD said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed. 2. This is the land that yet remaineth: all the border of the Philistines, and all Geshuri. 3. From Sihor, which is before Egypt, even unto the borders of Ekron northward, which is counted to the Canaanite: five lords of the Philistines; the Gazathites, and the Ashdodites, the Ekhalonites, the Gittites, and the Ekronites; also the Avites. 4. From the south, all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that is beside the Sidonians, unto Aphek, to the borders of the Amorites. 5. And the land of the Gibeonites, and all Lebanon toward the sun-rising, from Baal-gad under mount Hermon, unto the entering into Hamath. 6. All the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon unto Misrephothmaim, and all the Sidonians, them will I drive out from before the children of Israel: only divide thou it by lot unto the Israelites for an inheritance, as I have commanded thee.

Here, 1. God puts Joshua in mind of his old age, *ver.* 1. (1.) It is said that Joshua was old and stricken in years, and he and Caleb were at this time the only old men among the thousands of Israel; none of all those who were numbered at mount Sinai being now alive, but they only. He had been a man of war from his youth, *Exod.* xvii. 10. but now yielding to the infirmities of age, with which it is in vain for the stoutest to think of contesting. It should seem Joshua had not the same strength and vigour in his old age that Moses had: all that come to old age do not find it alike good, generally the days of old age prove evil days, and such as there is no pleasure in them, not expectation of service from them. (2.) God takes notice of it to him, *God said to him, Thou art old.* Note, It is good for those who are old and stricken in years to be put in remembrance of their being so. Some have gray hairs here and there upon them, and perceive it not, *Hos.* vii. 9. they do not care to think of it, and therefore need to be told of it, that they may be quickened to do the work of life, and make preparation for death, which is coming towards them apace. But God mentions Joshua's age and growing infirmities, 1. As a reason why he should now lay by the thoughts of pursuing the war; he cannot expect to see an end of it quickly, for there remained much land, more perhaps than he thought, to be possessed, in several parts remote from each other: and it was not fit that at his age he should be put upon the fatigue of renewing the war, and carrying it to such distant places; no, it was enough for him that he had reduced the body of the country, let him have his quietus given him with honour, and the thanks of his people, for the good services he had done them, and let the conquering of the skirts of the country be left for those who shall come after. As he had entered into the labours of Moses, so let others enter into his, and bring forth the top-stone; the doing of which was reserved for David long after. Observe, God considers the frame of his people, and would not have them burdened with work above their strength. It cannot be expected that old people should do as they have done for God and their country. 2. As a reason why he should speedily apply himself to the dividing of that which he had conquered, that work must be done and done quickly, it was necessary he should preside in the doing of it, and therefore he being old and stricken in years, and not likely to continue long, let him make that his concluding piece of service to God and Israel. All people, but especially old people, should set themselves to do that presently which must be done before they die, lest death prevent them, *Eccles.* ix. 10.

1. He gives him a particular account of the land that yet remained unconquered, which was intended for Israel's, and which, in due time, they should be masters of, if they did not put a bar in their own door. Divers places are here instanced in, some in the south, as the country of the Philistines, governed by five lords, and the land that lay towards Egypt, *ver.* 2, 3. Some westward, as that which lay towards the Sidonians, *ver.* 4. Some eastward, as all Lebanon, *ver.* 5. and some towards the north, as that in the entering-in of Hamath, *ver.* 6. Joshua is told this, and he made the people acquainted with it, 1. That they might be the more affected with God's goodness to them in giving them this good land, and might thereby be engaged to love and serve him, for if this which they had was too little, God would moreover give them such and such things, 2 Sam. xii. 2. 2. That they might not be tempted to make any league, or contract any dangerous familiarity with these neighbours, so as to learn their way, but might rather be jealous of them, as people that kept them from their right, and that they had just cause of quarrel with. 5. That they might keep themselves in a posture for war, and not think of putting off the harness, as long as there remained any land to be possessed. Nor must we lay aside our spiritual armour, or be off our watch, till our victory be complete in the kingdom of glory.

3. He promiseth, that he would make the Israelites masters of all those countries that were yet unsubdued, though Joshua was old, and not able to do it, old and not likely to live to see it done: Whatever becomes of us, and however we may be laid aside as despised broken vessels, God will do his own work in his own time, *ver.* 6. I will drive them out. The original is emphatical, it is I that will do it; I that can do it, when thou art dead and gone, and will do it, if Israel be not wanting to themselves. I will do it by my Word, so the Chaldee here, as in many other places, by the eternal

nal Word, the captain of the hosts of the Lord. This promise that he would drive them out from before the children of Israel, plainly supposeth it as the condition of the promise, that the children of Israel must themselves attempt and endeavour their extirpation, must go up against them, else they could not be said to be driven out before them; if afterwards Israel through sloth, or cowardice, or affection to these idolaters, sit still and let them alone, they must blame themselves, and not God, if they be not driven out. We must work out our salvation, and then God will work in us, and work with us; we must resist our spiritual enemies, and then God will tread them under our feet, we must go forth to our Christian work and warfare, and then God will go forth before us.

7. Now therefore, divide this land for an inheritance, unto the nine tribes, and the half tribe of Manasseh, 8. With whom the Reubenites, and the Gadites have received their inheritance, which Moses gave them beyond Jordan eastward, *even as Moses the servant of the LORD gave them*: 9. From Aroer that is unto the bank of the river Arnon, and the city that is in the midst of the river, and all the plain of Medeba upon Dibon: 10. And all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, which reigned in Heshbon, unto the border of the children of Ammon: 11. And Gilead, and the border of the Geshurites, and Maachathites, and all mount Hermon, and all Bashan unto Salcah: 12. All the kingdom of Og in Bashan, which reigned in Ashtaroth, and in Edrei, who remained of the remnant of the giants: for these did Moses smite, and cast them out. 13. Nevertheless, the children of Israel expelled not the Geshurites, nor the Maachathites, but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the Israelites until this day. 14. Only unto the tribe of Levi he gave none inheritance, the sacrifices of the LORD God of Israel made by fire, *are* their inheritance, as he said unto them. 15. ¶ And Moses gave unto the tribe of the children of Reuben, *inheritance* according to their families: 16. And their coast was from Aroer that is on the bank of the river Arnon, and the city that is in the midst of the river, and all the plain by Medeba: 17. Heshbon, and all her cities that *are* in the plain; Dibon, and Bamoth-baal, and Beth-baal-meon, 18. And Jehaza, and Kedemoth, and Maphaath, 19. And Kirjathaim, and Sibmah, and Zareth-shahar, in the mount of the valley, 20. And Beth-peor, and Ashdod-pisgah, and Beth-jeshimoth, 21. And all the cities of the plain, and all the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, which reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses smote, with the princes of Midian, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, *which were* dukes of Sihon, dwelling in the country. 22. ¶ Balaam also the son of Beor the soothsayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword, among them that were slain by them. 23. And the border of the children of Reuben, was Jordan, and the border *thereof*. This *was* the inheritance of the children of Reuben after their families, the cities, and the villages thereof. 24. And Moses gave *inheritance* unto the tribe of Gad, *even* unto the children of Gad, according to their families: 25. And their coast was Jazer, and all the cities of Gilead, and half the land of the children of Ammon, unto Aroer that is before Rabbah: 26. And from Heshbon unto Ramath-mispah, and Betonim: and from Mahanaim unto the border of Debir: 27. And in the valley, Beth-aram, and Beth-nimrah, and Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon, king of Heshbon, Jordan and *his* border, *even* unto the edge of the sea of Cinnereth, on the other side Jordan eastward. 28. This *is* the inheritance of the children of Gad, after their families, the cities and their villages. 29. ¶ And Moses gave *inheritance* unto the half-tribe of Manasseh: and *this was the possession* of the half-tribe of the children of Manasseh, by their families. 30. And their coast was from Mahanaim, all Bashan, all the kingdom of Og, king of Bashan, and all the towns of Jair, which *are* in Bashan, threescore cities: 31. And half Gilead, and Ashtaroth, and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan, *were pertaining* unto the children of Machir the son of Manasseh, *even* to the one half of the children of Machir by their families. 32. These *are the countries* which Moses did distribute for inheritance in the plains of Moab on the other side Jordan, by Jericho eastward. 33. But unto the tribe of Levi Moses gave not *any* inheritance: the LORD God of Israel *was* their inheritance, as he said unto them.

Here is, 1. Orders given to Joshua to assign to each tribe their portion of this land, including that which was yet unsubdued, which must be brought into the lot, in a believing confidence, that it should be conquered when Israel was multiplied, so as to have occasion for it, *ver. 7. Now divide this land*. Joshua thought all must be conquered, before any must be divided; no, faith God, there is as much conquered as will serve your turn

for the present, divide that, and make your best of it, and wait for the remainder hereafter. Note, We must take the comfort of what we have, though we cannot compass all we would have.

Observe, 1. The land must be divided among the several tribes, and they must not always live in common, as they now did. Which may shewer a just property is acquired, it is the will of that God who has given the earth to the children of men, that there should be such a thing, and that every man should know his own, and not invade that which is another's. The world must be governed, not by force but right, by the law of equity, not of arms.

2. That it must be divided for an inheritance, though they got it by conquest. (1.) The promise of it came to them as an inheritance from their fathers; the land of promise pertained to the children of promise, who were thus beloved for their father's sakes, and in performance of the covenant with them. (2.) The possession of it was to be transmitted by them, as an inheritance to their children. Many times what is got by force is soon lost again, but Israel having an incontestible title to this land by the divine grant, might see it thereby secured as an inheritance to their seed after them, and that God kept his mercy for thousands.

3. That Joshua must divide it, not by his own will, though he was a very wise, just and good man, it must not be left to him to give what he pleased to each tribe; but he must do it by lot, which referred the matter wholly to God, and to his determination, for he it is that appointeth the bounds of our habitation, and every man's judgment must proceed from him. But Joshua must preside in this affair, must manage this solemn appeal to providence, and see that the lot was drawn fairly and without fraud, and that every tribe did acquiesce in it. The lot indeed *causeth contention to cease*, Prov. xviii. 18. But if upon this lot any controversy should rise, Joshua by his wisdom and authority must determine it, and prevent any ill consequences of it. Joshua must have the honour of dividing the land, (1.) Because he had undergone the fatigue of conquering it, and when through his hand each tribe received its allotment, they would thereby be made the more sensible of their obligations to him. And what a pleasure must it needs be to a man of such a public spirit as Joshua was, to see the people that were so dear to him, eating the labour of his hands? (2.) That he might be herein a type of Christ, who has not only conquered for us the gates of hell, but has opened to us the gates of heaven, and having purchased the eternal inheritance for all believers, will in due time put them all in possession of it.

2. An account is here given of the distribution of the land on the other side Jordan, among the Reubenites, and Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, which comes in, (1.) As the reason why this land within Jordan must be divided only to the nine tribes and a half, because the other two and a half were already provided for. (2.) As a pattern to Joshua in the work he had now to do. He had seen Moses distribute that land, which would give him some aim in distributing this, and from thence he might take his measures: only this was to be done by lot, but it should seem Moses did that himself, according to the wisdom given unto him. (3.) As an inducement to Joshua to hasten the dividing of this land, that the nine tribes and a half might not be kept any longer than was necessary out of their possession, since their brethren of the two tribes and a half were so well settled in theirs; and God their common Father would not have such a difference made between his children.

1. Here is a general description of the country that was given to the two tribes and a half, *which Moses gave them, even as Moses gave them*, *ver. 8*. The repetition implies a ratification of the grant by Joshua, Moses settled that matter, and as Moses settled it, so it shall rest; Joshua will not, under any pretence whatsoever, go about to alter it. And a reason is intimated why he would not, because Moses was the servant of the Lord, and acted in this matter by secret direction from him, and was faithful as a servant.

Here we have, (1.) The fixing of the boundaries of this country, by which they were divided from the neighbour nations, *ver. 9, &c.* Israel must know their own, and keep to it, and may not under pretence of their being God's peculiar people inroach upon their neighbours, and invade their rights and properties, by which they had a good and firm title by providence, though not as Israel a title by promise. (2.) An exception of one part of this country from Israel's possession, though it was in their grant, *viz. the Geshurites, and the Maachathites, ver. 13*. They had not leisure to reduce all the remote and obscure corners of the country in Moses's time, and afterwards they had no mind to it, being easy with what they had: Thus those who are not straitened in God's promises, are yet straitened in their own faith, and prayers, and endeavours.

2. A very particular account of the inheritances of these two tribes and a half; how they were separated from each other, and what cities, with the towns, villages, and fields commonly known and reputed to be appurtenances to them, belonged to each tribe. This is very fully and exactly set down, 1. That posterity might in reading this history be the more affected with the goodness of God to their ancestors, when they found what a large and fruitful country, and what abundance of great and famous cities he put them in possession of. God's grants look best when we descend to the particulars. 2. That the limits of each tribe being punctually set down in this authentic record, disputes might be prevented, and such contestations between the tribes, as commonly happen where boundaries have not been adjusted, nor this matter brought to a certainty. And we have reason to think that the register here prescribed and published of the lot of each tribe, was of great use to Israel in after-ages, was often appealed to, and always acquiesced in, for the determining of *meum* and *tuum*.

1. We have here the lot of the tribe of Reuben, Jacob's first-born; who though he had lost the dignity and power which pertained to the birthright, yet it seems had the advantage of being first served. Perhaps those of that tribe had an eye to this, in desiring to be seated on that side Jordan, that since they could not expect the benefit of the first lot, they might have the credit of the first. In the account of the lot of this tribe, mention is made of the slaughter, (1.) Of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who reigned in this country, and might have kept it and his life if he would have been neighbourly, and have suffered Israel to pass through his territories, but by attempting to oppose them, justly brought ruin upon himself, *Numb. xxi. 21*. (2.) Of the princes of Midian who were slain afterwards in another war, *Numb. xxxi. 8*. And yet are here called dukes of Sihon, and are said to be smitten with him, because they were either tributaries to him, or in his opposition to Israel confederates with him, and hearty in his interests, and his fall made way for theirs not long after. (3.) Of Balaam particularly, that would, if he could, have cursed Israel, and was soon after recompensed *according to the wickedness of his endeavour*, *Psal. cxviii. 4*. For he fell with those that set him on. This was recorded before, *Numb. xxxi. 8*, and is here repeated, because the defeating of Balaam's purpose to curse Israel, was the turning of that curse into a blessing, and was such an instance of the power and goodness of God, as was fit to be had in everlasting remembrance. See *Micah vi. 5*.

Within the lot of this tribe was that mount Pisgah, from the top of which Moses took his view of the earthly Canaan, and his sight to the heavenly.

heavenly. And now far off thence Elijah was when he was fetched up to heaven in a chariot of fire. The separation of this tribe from the rest by the river Jordan, was that which Deborah lamented, and the preference they gave to their private interests above the public, was what she censured, *Judg.* v. 15, 16. In this tribe lay Hebron and Sibmah, famed for their fruitful fields and vineyards. See *Isa.* xvi. 8, 9. *Jer.* xlviii. 32. This tribe, with that of Gad, was sorely shaken by Hazael, king of Syria, *2 Kings* x. 33. and afterwards dislodged and carried into captivity, twenty years before the general captivity of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria. *1 Chron.* v. 26.

2. The lot of the tribe of Gad, *ver.* 24—28. This lay north of Reuben's lot, the country of Gilead lay in this tribe, so famous for its balm; that it is thought strange indeed if there be no balm in Gilead, and the cities of Jabbesh-Gilead, and Ramoth-Gilead, which we often read of in scripture. Succoth and Peniel, which we read of in the story of Gideon, were in this tribe: and that forest which is called the wood of Ephraim, (from the slaughter Jephthah made there of the Ephraimites) in which Abshalom's rebellious army was beaten, while his father David lay at Mahanaim, one of the frontier cities of this tribe, *ver.* 26. Sharon was in this tribe, famous for roses. And within the limits of this tribe lived those Gadarines, that loved their swine better than their Saviour, fitter to be called Gergasites than Israelites.

3. The lot of the half-tribe of Manasseh, *ver.* 29—31. Bashan, the kingdom of Og, was in this allotment, famous for the best timber, witness the oaks of Bashan, and the best breed of cattle, witness the bulls and rams of Bashan. This tribe lay north of Gad, reached to mount Hermon, and had in it part of Gilead. Mizpeh was in this half-tribe, and Jephthah was one of its ornaments: so was Elijah, for in this tribe was Thibbe, whence he is called the Tishbite, and Jair was another. In the edge of the tribe stood Chorazin, honoured with Christ's wondrous works, but ruined by his ghastly woe for not improving them.

Lastly, Twice in this chapter it is taken notice of that to the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheritance, *ver.* 14—33. for so God had appointed, *Numb.* xviii. 20. If they had been to have a lot in share by themselves, Moses would have served them first, not because it was his own tribe, but because it was God's, but they must be provided for in another manner; their habitations must be scattered in all the tribes, and their maintenance brought out of all the tribes, and God himself was the portion both of their inheritance and of their cup, *Deut.* x. 9.—xviii. 2.

C H A P. XIV.

Here is, 1. The general method that was taken in dividing the land, *ver.* 1—5. 2. The demand Caleb made of Hebron, as his by promise, and therefore not to be put into the lot with the rest, *ver.* 6—12. And Joshua's grant of that demand, *ver.* 14, 15. This was done at Gilgal, which was as yet their head-quarters.

1. **A**ND these are the countries which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel distributed for inheritance to them. 2. By lot was their inheritance, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes, and for the half-tribe. 3. For Moses had given the inheritance of two tribes, and an half-tribe, on the other side Jordan: but unto the Levites he gave none inheritance among them. 4. For the children of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim; therefore they gave no part unto the Levites in the land, save cities to dwell in, with their suburbs for their cattle, and for their substance. 5. As the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did, and they divided the land. 6. ¶ Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Kenezite, said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of God, concerning me and thee, in Kadesh-barnea.

The historian having in the foregoing chapter given an account of the disposal of the countries on the other side Jordan, now comes to tell us what they did with the countries in the land of Canaan. They were not conquered to be left desert, a habitation for dragons, and a court for owls, *Isa.* xxxiv. 13. No, the Israelites that had hitherto been closely encamped in a body, and the greatest part of them such as never knew any other way of living, must now disperse themselves to replenish these new conquests. It is said of the earth, *God created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited*, *Isa.* xlv. 18. Canaan would have been subdued in vain if it had not been inhabited. Yet every man might not go and settle where he pleased, but as there seems to have been in the days of Peleg an orderly and regular division of the habitable earth among the sons of Noah, *Gen.* x. 25—32. so there was now such a division of the land of Canaan among the sons of Jacob. God had given Moses directions how this distribution should be made, and those directions are here punctually observed. See *Numb.* xxvi. 53, &c.

1. The managers of this great affair, were Joshua the chief magistrate, Eleazar the chief priest, and ten princes, one of each of the tribes that were now to have their inheritance, whom God himself had nominated (*Numb.* xxxiv. 17, &c.) some years before, and it should seem they were all now in being, and attended this service, that every tribe having a representative of its own might be satisfied that there was fair dealing, and might the more contentedly sit down by its lot.

2. The tribes among whom this dividend was to be made, were nine and a half. (1.) Not the two and a half that were already seated, *ver.* 3. though perhaps now they saw what a good land Canaan was, and how effectually it was subdued, they might some of them repent their choice, and wish they had now been to have their lot with their brethren, upon which condition they would gladly have given up what they had on the other side Jordan; but it would not be admitted; they had made their election without power of revocation, and so must their doom be, themselves have divided it; they must stick as they chose. (2.) Not the tribe of Levi; that was to be otherwise provided for. God hath distinguished them from, and dignified them above, the other tribes, and they must not now mingle them-

selves with them, nor cast in their lot among them, for that would intangle them in the affairs of this life, which would not consist with a due attendance on their sacred function. But, (3.) Joseph made two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim, pursuant to Jacob's adoption of Joseph's two sons, and so the number of the tribes was kept up to twelve, though Levi was taken out, which is intimated here, *ver.* 4. The children of Joseph were two tribes, therefore they gave no part to Levi, they being twelve without him.

3. The rule by which they went was the lot, *ver.* 2. The disposal of that is of the Lord, *Prov.* xvi. 33. and it was here used in an affair of weight, and which could not otherwise be accommodated to universal satisfaction, and it was used in a solemn religious manner as an appeal to God, by consent of parties. In dividing by lot, (1.) They referred themselves to God, and to his wisdom and sovereignty, believing him fitter to determine for them, than they for themselves, *Psal.* xlvii. 4. *He shall choose our inheritance for us.* (2.) They professed a willingness to abide by the determination of it; for every man must take what is his lot, and make the best of it. In allusion to this, we are said to obtain an inheritance in Christ, *Eph.* i. 11. *ἐκ παλαιῶν*, we have obtained it by lot. So the word signifies; for it is obtained by a divine designation, Christ, our Joshua, gives eternal life to as many as were given him, *John* xvii. 2.

7. Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to espy out the land: and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart. 8. Nevertheless, my brethren that went up with me, made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the LORD my God. 9. And Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden, shall be thine inheritance, and thy childrens for ever: because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God. 10. And now behold the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, ever since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. 11. As yet I am as strong this day, as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out and to come in. 12. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day, (for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced) if so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said. 13. And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh, Hebron for an inheritance. 14. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, unto this day: because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel. 15. And the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba, which Arba was a great man among the Anakims. And the land had rest from war.

Before the lot was cast into the lap for the determining of the portions of the respective tribes, the particular portion of Caleb is assigned him, who was now, except Joshua, not only the oldest man in all Israel, but was twenty years older than any of them, for all that were above twenty years old when he was forty were dead in the wilderness, it was fit therefore that the phoenix of his age should have some particular marks of honour put upon him in the dividing of the land.

Now, 1. Caleb here presents his petition, or rather makes his demand, to have Hebron given him for a possession (*this mountain* he calls it, *ver.* 12.) and not to have that put into the lot with the other parts of the country. To justify his demand, he shews that God had long since, by Moses, promised him that very mountain; so that God's mind being already made known in this matter, it would be a vain and needless thing to consult it any farther by casting lots, by which we are to appeal to God in those cases only which cannot otherwise be decided, not in those which, like this here, are already determined. Caleb is here called the Kenezite, some think, from some remarkable victory obtained by him over the Kenezites, as the Romans gave their great generals titles from the countries they conquered, as Africanus, Germanicus, &c.

To enforce his petition, (1.) He brings the children of Judah, i. e. the heads and great men of that tribe, along with him to present it, who were willing thus to pay their respects to that ornament of their tribe, and to testify their consent that he should be provided for by himself, and that they would not take it as any reflection upon the rest of his tribe. Caleb was the person whom God had chosen out of that tribe to be employed in dividing the land, *Numb.* xxxiv. 19. And therefore left he should seem to improve his authority as a commissioner for his own private advantage and satisfaction, he brings his brethren along with him, and waving his own power, seems rather to rely upon their interest. (2.) He appeals to Joshua himself concerning the truth of the allegations upon which he grounded his petition. *Thou knowest the thing*, *ver.* 6. (3.) He makes a very honourable mention of Moses, which he knew would be not at all displeasing to Joshua. Moses the man of God, *ver.* 6. and the servant of the Lord, *ver.* 7. What Moses said he took as from God himself, because Moses was his mouth, and his agent, and therefore he had reason both to desire and expect it should be made good: what can be more earnestly desired than the tokens of God's favour? And what more confidently expected than the grants of his promise?

Caleb, in his petition sets forth,

(1.) The testimony of his conscience concerning his integrity in the management of that great affair, on which it proved the fate of Israel turned, the spying out of the land. Caleb was one of the twelve that was sent out on that errand, *ver.* 7. and he now reflected upon it with comfort, and mentioned it, not in pride, but as that which, being the consideration of the grant, was necessary to be inserted in his plea. (1.) That he made his report as it was in his heart, i. e. he spake as he thought, when he spake so honourably of the land of Canaan, so confidently of the power of God to put them in possession of it, and so contemptibly of the opposition that the Canaanites, even the Anakims themselves, could make against them, as we find

find he did, *Numb. xiii. 30.—xiv. 7, 8, 9.* He did not do it merely to please Moses, or to keep the people quiet, much less from a spirit of contradiction to his fellows, but from a full conviction of the truth of what he said, and a firm belief of the divine promise. (2.) That herein he *wholly followed the Lord his God, i. e.* he kept close to his duty, and sincerely aimed at the glory of God in it. He conformed himself to the divine will with an eye to the divine favour. He had obtained this testimony from God himself, *Numb. xiv. 24.* and therefore it was not vain-glory in him to speak of it, no more than it is for those who have *God's spirit witnessing with their spirits* that they are the children of God, humbly and thankfully to tell others for their encouragement what was done for their souls. Note, They that follow God fully when they are young, shall have both the credit and comfort of it when they are old, and the reward of it for ever in the heavenly Canaan. (3.) That he did this when all his brethren and companions in that service, except Joshua, did otherwise. They *made the heart of the people melt*, ver. 8. and how pernicious the consequences of it were, was very well known. It adds much to the praise of following God, if we adhere to him when others desert and decline from him. Caleb needed not to mention particularly Joshua's carriage in this matter, it was sufficiently known, and he would not seem to flatter him: it was enough to say, ver. 6. *Then knowest what the Lord spake concerning me and thee.*

(2.) The experience he had had of God's goodness to him ever since to this day. Though he had wandered with the rest in the wilderness, and had been kept thirty-eight years out of Canaan, as they were, for that sin, which he was so far from having a hand in, that he had done his utmost to prevent it; yet instead of complaining of that, he mentions to the glory of God his mercy to him in two things, (1.) That he was kept alive in the wilderness, not only notwithstanding the common perils and fatigues of that tedious march, but though all that generation of Israelites, except himself and Joshua, were one way or other cut off by death: with what a grateful sense of God's goodness to him doth he speak it! ver. 10. *Now behold (behold and wonder) the Lord has kept me alive these forty and five years!* thirty-eight years in the wilderness, through the plagues of the desert, and seven years in Canaan through the perils of war. Note, (1.) While we live, it is God that keeps us alive, by his power he protects us from death, and by his bounty he supplies us continually with the supports and comforts of life. He *holdeth our soul in life.* (2.) The longer we live, the more sensible we should be of God's goodness to us in keeping us alive, his care in prolonging our frail lives, his patience in prolonging our forfeited lives. Has he kept me alive these forty-five years? Is it about that time of life with us? or is it more? or is it less? We have reason to say, *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed*, how much we are indebted to the favour of God, and what shall we render? Let the life thus kept by the providence of God be devoted to his praise. (3.) The death of many others round about us, should make us the more thankful to God for sparing us and keeping us alive. Thousands falling on our right-hand, and on our left, and yet we spared, these distinguishing favours are very obliging to singular obedience. (2.) That he was fit for business now he was in Canaan. Though eighty-five years old, yet as hearty and lively as when he was forty, ver. 11. *As my strength was then, so it is now.* This was the fruit of the promise, and out-did what was said; for God not only gives what he promiseth, but he gives more; life by promise, shall be life, and health, and strength, and all that which will make the promised life a blessing and comfort. Moses had said in his prayer, *Psalm xc. 10.* that at *eighty years old even their strength is labour and sorrow*, and so it is most commonly, but Caleb was an exception from that rule; his strength at eighty-five was ease and joy, this he got by *following the Lord fully.* Caleb takes notice of this here to the glory of God, and as an excuse for his asking a portion which he might fetch out of the giants hands: let not Joshua tell him he *knew not what he asked*; could he get the possession of that which he begged for a title to? Yes, faith he, why not? I am as fit for war now as ever I was.

(3.) The promise Moses had made him in God's name that he should have *this mountain*, ver. 9. This promise is his chief plea, and that on which he relies. As we find it, *Numb. xiv. 24.* it is general, *him will I bring into the land whereunto he went, and his seed shall possess it*: but it seems it was more particular, and Joshua knew it; both sides understood this mountain for which Caleb was now a suitor to be intended. This was the place from which, more than any other, the spies took their report, for here they met with the sons of Anak, *Numb. xiii. 22.* the sight of whom made such an impression upon them, ver. 33. We may suppose, that Caleb observing what stress they laid upon the difficulty of conquering Hebron, a city garrisoned by the giants, and now from thence they inferred that the conquest of the whole land was utterly impracticable, in opposition to their suggestions, and to convince the people that he spake as he thought, he bravely desired to have that city which they called invincible, assigned to himself for his own portion; I will undertake to deal with that, and if I cannot get it for my inheritance, I will be without. Well, faith Moses, it shall be thine own then, win it and wear it. Such a noble heroic spirit Caleb had, and so desirous was he to inspire his brethren with it, that he chose this place only because it was the most difficult to be conquered, and to shew that his soul did not decay any more than his body; now forty-five years after he adheres to his choice, and is still of the same mind.

(4.) The hopes he had of being master of it, though the sons of Anak were in possession of it, ver. 12. *If the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out.* The city of Hebron Joshua had already reduced, chap. x. 37. but the mountain which belonged to it, and which was inhabited by the sons of Anak, was yet unconquered, for though the cutting off of the Anakims from Hebron was mentioned, chap. xi. 21. because the historian would relate all the military actions together, yet it seems it was not done till after they begun to divide the land. Observe, He builds his hopes of driving out the sons of Anak upon the presence of God with him. He doth not say, because I am now as strong for war as I was at forty, therefore I shall drive them out, depending upon his personal valour; nor doth he depend upon his interest in the warlike tribe of Judah, who attended him now in making his address, and no doubt would assist him. Nor doth he court Joshua's aid, or put it upon that *if thou wilt be with me I shall gain my point.* But *if the Lord will not be with me.* Here, 1. He seems to speak doubtfully of God's being with him, not from any distrust of his goodness or faithfulness. He had spoken without the least hesitation of God's presence with Israel in general, *Numb. xiv. 9. the Lord is with us*; but for himself, from a humble sense of his own unworthiness of such a favour, he chooses to express himself thus, *If the Lord will be with me.* The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, *If the word of the Lord be my helper*, that Word which is God, and in the fulness of time was made flesh, and is the Captain of our salvation. 2. He speaks without the least doubt, has assurance that if God were with him he should be able to dispossess the sons of Anak. If God be with us, *If God be for us, who can be against us*, so as to prevail? It is also intimated, that if God were not with him, though all the forces of Israel should come in to his assistance, he should not be able to gain his point. Whatever we undertake, God's favourable presence with us is all in

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all to our success; that therefore we must earnestly pray for, and carefully make sure of, by keeping ourselves in the love of God; and on that we must depend, and from that take our encouragement against the greatest difficulties.

Upon the whole matter Caleb's request is, ver. 12. *give me this mountain.* (1.) Because it was formerly in God's promise; and he would let Israel know how much he valued the promise; insisting upon *this mountain whereof the Lord spake in that day*, as most desirable, though perhaps as good a portion might have fallen to him by lot in common with the rest. They that live by faith, value that which is given by promise far above that which is given by providence only. (2.) Because it was now in the Anakims possession, and he would let Israel know how little he feared the enemy, and would by his example animate them to push on their conquests. Herein Caleb answered his name, which signifies *all heart*.

2. Joshua grants his petition, ver. 13. *Joshua blessed him*, commended his bravery, applauded his request, and gave him what he asked. He also prayed for him, and for his good success in his intended undertaking against the sons of Anak. Joshua was both a prince and a prophet, and upon both accounts it was proper for him to give Caleb his blessing, *for the life is blessed of the better.* Hebron was settled on Caleb and his heirs, ver. 14. *because he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel.* And happy are we if we follow him. Note, Singular piety shall be crowned with singular favours. Now, (1.) We are here told what Hebron had been; the city of Arba, a great man among the Anakims, ver. 15. we find it called Kirjath-arba, *Gen. xxiii. 2.* as the place where Sarah died. Hereabouts Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, lived most of their time in Canaan, and near to it was the cave of Machpelah where they were buried, which perhaps had led Caleb hither, when he went out to spy out the land, and had made him covet this rather than any other part for his inheritance. (2.) We are afterwards told what Hebron was. (2.) It was a priest's city, *Josh. xxi. 13.* and a city of refuge, *Josh. xx. 7.* when Caleb had it, he contented himself with the country about it, and cheerfully gave the city to the priests the Lord's ministers; thinking it could not be better bestowed, no not upon his own children, nor that it was the less his own for being thus devoted to God. (2.) It was a royal city, and in the beginning of David's reign, the metropolis of the kingdom of Judah; thither his people resorted to him, and there he reigned seven years. Thus highly was Caleb's city honoured, pity there should have been such a blemish upon his family long after, as Nabal was, who was *of the house of Caleb*, 1 Sam. xxv. 3. But the best men cannot entail their virtues.

C H A P. XV.

The land though not completely conquered, yet being (as was said in the close of the foregoing chapter) at rest from war, for the present, their armies all drawn out of the field, to a general rendezvous at Gilgal, there they began to divide the land, though the work was afterwards perfected at Shiloh, chap. xviii. 1. &c. In this chapter we have the lot of the tribe of Judah, which in this as in other things had the preëminence; 1. The borders or bounds of the inheritance of Judah, ver. 1—12. 2. The particular assignment of Hebron and the country thereabouts to Caleb and his family, ver. 13—19. 3. The names of the several cities that fell within Judah's lot, ver. 21—63.

1. **T**HIS then was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah by their families, *even to the border of Edom, the wilderness of Zin southward, was the uttermost part of the south-coast.* 2. And their south-border was from the shore of the salt-sea, from the bay that looketh southward. 3. And it went out to the south-side to Maaleh-acrabim, and passed along to Zin, and ascended up on the south-side to Kadesh-barnea: and passed along to Hezron, and went up to Adar, and fetched a compass to Karkaa. 4. From thence it passed toward Azmon, and went out unto the river of Egypt, and the goings out of that coast were at the sea: this shall be your south-coast. 5. And the east-border was the salt-sea, *even unto the end of Jordan*: and their border in the north-quarter was from the bay of the sea, at the uttermost part of Jordan. 6. And the border went up to Beth-hogla, and passed along by the north of Beth-arabah, and the border went up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben. 7. And the border went up toward Debir from the valley of Achor, and so northward looking toward Gilgal, that is before the going up to Adummim, which is on the south-side of the river: and the border passed towards the waters of En-themish, and the goings out thereof where at En-rogel. 8. And the border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom, unto the south-side of the Jebusite, the same is Jerusalem: and the border went up to the top of the mountain, that lieth before the valley of Hinnom, westward, which is at the end of the valley of the giants northward. 9. And the border was drawn from the top of the hill, unto the fountains of the water of Nephtoah, and went out to the cities of mount Ephron, and the border was drawn to Baalah, which is Kirjath-jearim. 10. And the border compassed from Baalah westward unto mount Seir, and passed along unto the side of mount Jearim (which is Chesalon) on the north-side, and went down to Beth-shemesh, and passed on to Timnah. 11. And the border went out unto the side of Ekron northward: and the border was drawn to Shicron, and passed along to mount Baalah, and went out unto Jabneel; and the goings out of the border were at the sea. 12. And the west-border was to the

great sea, and the coast *thereof*: this is the coast of the children of Judah, round about according to their families.

Judah and Joseph were the two sons of Jacob, on whom Reuben's forfeited birthright devolved: Judah had the dominion entailed on him, and Joseph the double portion, and therefore these two tribes were first seated: Judah in the southern part of the land of Canaan, and Joseph in the northern part, and on them the other seven did attend, and had their respective lots as appurtenances to these two; the lots of Benjamin, Simeon and Dan, were appendant to Judah, and those of Issachar and Zebulon, Naphtali and Ashur, to Joseph. These two were first set up to be provided for, it should seem, before there was such an exact survey of the land as we find afterwards, *chap. xviii. 9.* It is probable, the most considerable parts of the northern and southern countries, and those that lay nearest to Gilgal, and which the people were best acquainted with, were first put into two portions, and the lot was cast upon them between these two principal tribes, of the one of which Joshua was, and of the other Caleb, who was the first commissioner in this writ of partition; and by the decision of that lot, the southern country fell to Judah, of which we have an account in this chapter, and the northern to Joseph, of which we have an account in the two following chapters. And when this was done, there was a more equal dividend (either in quantity or quality) of the remainder among the seven tribes. And this, probably, was intended in that general rule which was given concerning this partition, *Numb. xxiii. 54. to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less, and that every man's inheritance shall be where his lot falleth, i. e. ye shall appoint two greater portions which shall be determined by lot to those more numerous tribes of Judah and Joseph, and then the rest shall be lesser portions to be lotted to the numerous tribes.* The former was done in Gilgal, the latter in Shiloh.

In these verses we have the borders of the lot of Judah, which as the rest is said to be *by their families, i. e. with an eye to the number of their families.* And it intimates, that Joshua and Eleazar, and the rest of the commissioners, when they had by lot given each tribe its portion, did afterwards (it is probable by lot likewise) subdivide those larger portions, and assign to each family its inheritance, and then to each household; which would be better done by this supreme authority, and be apt to give less disgust, than if it had been left to the inferior magistrates of each tribe to make that distribution.

The borders of this tribe are here largely fixed, yet not unalterably, for a good deal of that which lies within these bounds was afterwards assigned to the lots of Simeon and Dan. (1.) The eastern border was all, and only the salt-sea, *ver. 5.* Every sea is salt, but this was of an extraordinary and more than natural saltiness, the effect of that fire and brimstone with which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed in Abraham's time, whose ruins lie buried in the bottom of this dead water, which never either was moved itself, or had any living thing in it.

(2.) The southern border was that of the land of Canaan in general, as will appear by comparing, *ver. 1, 2, 3, 4.* with *Numb. xxix. 3, 4, 5.* So that this powerful and warlike tribe of Judah guarded the frontiers of the whole land, on that side which lay towards their old sworn enemies, (though there two fathers were twin-brethren) the Edomites. Our Lord therefore, who *sprang out of Judah, and whose the kingdom is, shall judge the mount of Sion, Obad. 21.*

(3.) The northern border divided it from the lot of Benjamin. In this mention is made of the stone of Boian a Reubenite, *ver. 6.* who probably was a great commander of those forces of Reuben that came over Jordan, and died in the camp at Gilgal, and was buried not far off under this stone. The valley of Achor doth likewise lie upon this border, *ver. 7.* to mind the men of Judah of the trouble which Achan, one of their tribe, gave to the congregation of Israel, that they might not be too much lifted up with their services. This northern line touched close upon Jerusalem, *ver. 8.* so close as to include in the lot of this tribe mount Zion and mount Moriah, though the greater part of the city lay in the lot of Benjamin.

(4.) The west border went near to the great sea at first, *ver. 12.* but afterwards, the lot of the tribe of Dan took off a good part of Judah's lot on that side; for the lot was only to determine between Judah and Joseph which should have the north, and which the south, and not immovably to fix the border of either.

Judah's inheritance had its boundaries determined; though it was a powerful warlike tribe, and had a great interest in the other tribes, yet they must not therefore be left to their own choice, to enlarge their possessions at pleasure, but must live so as that their neighbours might live by them. Those that are placed high, yet must not think to be *placed alone in the midst of the earth.*

13. ¶ And unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh, he gave a part among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the LORD to Joshua, *even* the city of Arba the father of Anak, which city is Hebron. 14. And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak, Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai, the children of Anah. 15. And he went up thence to the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjath-sepher. 16. ¶ And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. 17. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife. 18. And it came to pass as she came unto him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field; and she lighted off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldst thou? 19. Who answered, Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a south-land, give me also springs of water: and he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.

The historian seems pleased with every occasion to make mention of Caleb, and to do him honour, because he had honoured God in following him fully. The grant Joshua made him of the mountain of Hebron for his inheritance is here repeated, *ver. 13.* And it is said to be given him. (1.) According to the command of the Lord to Joshua. Though Caleb in his petition had made out a very good title to it by promise, yet because God had ordered Joshua to divide the land by lot, he would not in this one single instance, no not to gratify his old friend Caleb, do otherwise, without orders from God, whose oracle, it is probable, he consulted on this occasion. In

every doubtful case it is very desirable to know the mind of God, and to see the way of our duty plain. (2.) It is said to be a part among the children of Judah; though it was assigned him before the lot of that tribe came up, yet it proved, God so directing the lot, to be in the heart of that tribe, which was graciously ordered in kindness to him, that he might not be as one separated from his brethren, and surrounded by those of other tribes.

Now Caleb having obtained this grant, we are told,

1. How he signalized his own valour in the conquest of Hebron, *ver. 14.* He drove thence the three sons of Anak; he and those that he engaged to assist him in this service. This is mentioned here, to shew that the confidence he had expressed of success in this affair through the presence of God with him, *chap. xiv. 12.* did not deceive him, but the event answered his expectation. It is not said that he slew these giants but he drove them thence, which intimates that they retired upon his approach, and fled before him; the strength and stature of their bodies could not keep up the courage of their minds, but with the countenances of lions, they had the hearts of trembling hares. Thus doth God often cut off the spirit of princes, *Isa. lxxvi. 12. take away the heart of the chief of the people, Job. xii. 24.* and so shame the confidence of the proud; and thus if we resist the devil, that roaring lion, though he fall not, yet he will flee.

2. How he encouraged the valour of those about him in the conquest of Debir, *ver. 15, &c.* It seems, though Joshua had once made himself master of Debir, *chap. x. 39.* yet the Canaanites had regained the possession in the absence of the army, so that the work is to be done a second time; and when Caleb had completed the reduction of Hebron, which was for himself and his own family, to shew his zeal for the public good, as much as for his own private interest, he pushed on his conquest to Debir, and will not lay down his arms till he sees that city also effectually reduced, which lay but ten miles south of Hebron, though he had not any particular concern in it, but the reducing of it would be to the general advantage of his tribe. Let us learn hence, not to seek and mind our own things only, but to concern and engage ourselves for the welfare of the community we are members of; we are not *born for ourselves, nor must we live to ourselves.*

1. Notice is taken of the name of this city. It had been called Kirjath-sepher, the city of a book, and Kirjath-sanna, *ver. 49.* which some translate the city of learning; so the LXX, *ἡ πόλις τῆς γνώσεως*; whence some conjecture that it had been an university among the Canaanites, like Athens in Greece, in which their youth were educated; or perhaps the books of their chronicles or records, or the antiquities of the nation, were laid up there; and it may be this was it that made Caleb so desirous to see Israel masters of this city, that they might get acquainted with the ancient learning of the Canaanites.

2. The proffer that Caleb made of his daughter, and a good portion with her, to any one that would undertake to reduce that city, and to command the forces that should be employed in that service, *ver. 16.* Thus Saul promised a daughter to him that would kill Goliath, *1 Sam. xvii. 25.* neither of them intending to force their daughter to marry such as they could not affect, but both of them presuming upon their daughter's obedience, and submission to their father's will, though it might perhaps be contrary to their own honour or inclination. Caleb's family was not only honourable and wealthy but religious; he that himself followed the Lord fully, no question taught his children to do so, and therefore it could not but be a desirable match to any young gentleman. Caleb in making the proposal, aims, 1. To do service to his country by the reducing of that important place: And, 2. To marry a daughter well, to a man of learning, that would have a particular affection for the city of books; and a man of war, that would be likely to serve his country and do worthily in his generation. Could he but marry his child to a man of such a character, he would think her well bestowed, whether the share in the lot of his tribe were more or less.

3. The place was bravely taken by Othniel, a nephew of Caleb's, whom probably Caleb had thoughts of when he made the proffer, *ver. 7.* This Othniel, who thus signalized himself when he was young, long after, in his advanced years, was spirited to be both a deliverer and a judge in Israel, the first single person that presided over their affairs after Joshua's death; it is good for those who are setting out in the world, to begin betimes with that which is great and good; that excelling in service when they are young, they may excel in honour when they grow old.

4. Hereupon (all parties being agreed) Othniel married his cousin-german, Achsah, Caleb's daughter. It is likely he had a kindness for her before, which put him upon this bold undertaking to obtain her. Love to his country, and ambition of honour, and a desire to find favour with the princes of his people, would not have engaged him in this great action, but his affection for Achsah did, that made it intolerable to him to think that any one else should do more to win her favour than he would, and so inspired him with this generous fire. Thus is love strong as death, and jealousy cruel as the grave.

5. Because the historian is now upon the dividing of the land, he gives us an account of Achsah's portion which was in land, as more valuable, because enjoyed by virtue of the divine promise, though we may suppose the conquerors of Canaan, who had had the spoil of so many rich cities, were full of money too. (2.) Some land she had obtained by Caleb's free grant, which was allowed while she married within her own tribe and family, as Zelophehad's daughters did. He gave her a south land, *ver. 19.* Land indeed, but a south-land, dry, and apt to be parched. (3.) She obtained more upon her request, she would have had her husband to ask for a field, probably some particular field, or campaign ground, which belonged to Caleb's lot, and joined to that south land which he had settled upon his daughter at marriage. She thought her husband had the best interest in her father, who, no doubt, was extremely pleased with his late glorious achievement, but he thought it was more proper for her to ask, and she would be more likely to prevail; accordingly she did, submitting to her husband's judgment, though contrary to her own; and she humoured the thing wonderfully well, and managed it with a great deal of art. 1. She took the opportunity when her father brought her home to the house of her husband, when the satisfaction of having disposed of his daughter so well, would make him think nothing too much to do for her. 2. She lighted off her ass, in token of respect and reverence to her father, whom she would honour still, as much as before her marriage. She cried or sighed from off her ass, to the LXX and the vulgar Latin read it, she expressed some grief and concern, that she might give her father occasion to ask her what she wanted. 3. She calls it a blessing, because it would add much to the comfort of her settlement; and she was sure, that since she married, not only with her father's consent, but in obedience to his command, he would not deny her his blessing. (4.) She asks only for the water, without which the ground she had would be of little use, either for tillage or pasture, but she means the field in which the springs of water were; the modesty and reasonableness of her request gave it a greater advantage. Earth without water would be like a tree without sap, or the body of an animal without blood; therefore when God gathered the waters into one place, he wisely and graciously left some in every place, that the earth might be enriched for the service of man. See *Psalm. civ. 10, &c.* Well Achsah gained her point, her father gave her what she asked, and perhaps more, for he gave her the upper springs and the nether

nether springs. Two fields so called from the springs that were in them; as we commonly distinguish between the higher field and the lower field. Those who understand it but of one field, watered both with the rain of heaven, and the springs that issued out of the bowels of the earth, give countenance to the allusion we commonly make to this, when we pray for spiritual and heavenly blessings which relate to our souls, as blessings of the upper springs, and those which relate to the body, and the life that now is, as blessings of the nether springs.

From this story we may learn, 1. That it is no breach of the tenth commandment moderately to desire those comforts and conveniences of this life, which we see attainable in a fair and regular way. 2. That husbands and wives should mutually advise, and jointly agree about that which is for the common good of their family; and much more should they concur in asking of their heavenly Father the best blessings, those of the upper springs. 3. That parents must never think that lost which is bestowed upon their children for their real advantage, but must be free in giving them portions as well as maintenance, especially when they are dutiful. Caleb had sons, 1 *Chron.* iv. 15. and yet gave thus liberally to his daughter. Those parents forget themselves and their relation, who grudge their children what is convenient for them, when they can conveniently part with it.

20. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families. 21. And the uttermost cities of the tribe of the children of Judah toward the coast of Edom south-ward, were Kabzeel, and Eder, and Jagur, 22. And Kinah, and Dimonah, and Adahab, 23. And Kedeth, and Hazor and Ithnan, 24. Ziph, and Telem, and Bealoth, 25. And Hazor, Hadattah, and Kerioth, and Hezron, which is Hazor, 26. Aman, and Shema, and Moladah, 27. And Hazar gaddah, and Heshmon, and Beth-palet, 28. And Hazar-shual, and Beer-sheba, and Bizjothjah, 29. Baalah, and Iim, and Azem, 30. And Eltolad, and Chesil, and Hormah, 31. And Ziglaj, and Madmannah, and Sanfannah, 32. And Lebaoth, and Shilhim, and Ain, and Rimmon: all the cities are twenty and nine, with their villages. 33. And in the valley of Eshtaol, and Zoreah, and Ashnah, 34. And Zanoah, and Engannin, Tappuah, and Enan, 35. Jarmuth, and Adullam, Sochoh, and Azekah, 36. And Sharaim, and Adithaim, and Gederah, and Gederothaim: fourteen cities with their villages. 37. Zenan, and Hadathah, and Migdalgad, 38. And Dilean, and Mizpneh, and Joktheel, 39. Lachish, and Bozkath, and Eglon, 40. And Cabbon, and Lahmas, and Kithlish, 41. And Gederath, Bethdagon, and Naamah, and Makkedah: sixteen cities with their villages. 42. Libnah, and Ether, and Ashan, 43. And Jiphtah, and Ashnah, and Nezib, 44. And Keilah, and Achzib, and Marethah: nine cities with their villages. 45. Ekron with her towns and her villages. 46. From Ekron even unto the sea, all that lay near Ashdod, with their villages. 47. Ashdod with her towns and her villages, Gaza with her towns and her villages unto the river Egypt, and the great sea, and the border thereof. 48. ¶ And in the mountains, Shamir, and Jattir, and Scoth, 49. And Dannah, and Kirjath-fannah, which is Debir, 50. And Anab, and Elhtemoh, and Anim, 51. And Gothen, and Holon, and Giloh: eleven cities with their villages. 52. Arab, and Dumah, and Elhean, 53. And Janum, and Beth-tappuah, and Aphekah, 54. And Humtah, and Kirjath-arba (which is Hebron) and Zior: nine cities with their villages. 55. Maon, Carmel, and Ziph, and Juttah, 56. And Jezreel, and Jokdeam, and Zanoah, 57. Cain, Gibeah, and Timnah: ten cities with their villages. 58. Halhul, Bezur, and Gedor, 59. And Maarath, and Beth-anoth, and Eltekon: six cities with their villages. 60. Kirjath-baal (which is Kirjah-jearim) and Rabbah: two cities with their villages. 61. ¶ In the wilderness, Beth-araban, Middin, and Secacah, 62. And Nibhan, and the city of Salt, and Engedi: six cities with their villages. 63. As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day.

We have here a list of the several cities that fell within the lot of the tribe of Judah, which are mentioned by name, that they might know their own, and both keep it, and keep to it, and might neither through cowardice or sloth lose the possession of what was their own, nor through covetousness seek the possession of what was not their own. The cities are here named, and numbered several in classes, which they then could account for the reason of better than we can now. Here are, (1.) Some that are said to be the uttermost cities towards the coast of Edom, ver. 21, 31. Here are thirty-eight named, and yet said to be twenty-nine, ver. 32. because nine of these were afterwards transferred to the lot of Simeon, and are reckoned as belonging to that, as appears by comparing chap. xix. 2. &c. therefore those only are counted, (though the rest are named) which remained to Judah. (2.) Others that are said to be in the valley, ver. 33. they are counted to be fourteen, yet fifteen are named, but it is probable Gederah, and Gederathaim were either two names, or two parts of one and the same city. (3.) Then sixteen are named without any head of distinction, ver. 37—41. and nine more, ver. 42—44. (4.) Then the three Philistine cities, Ekron, Ashdod, and Gaza. (5.) Cities in the mountains, eleven in all, ver. 48—51. nine more, ver. 52, 53, 54. ten more, ver. 55, 56, 57. six more, ver. 58, 59; then two, ver. 60. and six in the wilderness, a part of the country not so thick of inhabitants as some others were.

Now here, (1.) We do not find Bethlehem, which was afterwards the city of David, and was enobled by the birth of our Lord Jesus in it. But that city, which at the best was but *little among the thousands of Judah*, Mic. v. 2. except that it was thus dignified, was now so little as not to be accounted one of the cities, but perhaps was one of the villages not named. Christ came to give honour to the places he was related to, not to receive honour from them. (2.) Jerusalem is said to continue in the hands of the Jebusites, ver. 63. for the children of Judah could not drive them out, viz. through their sluggishness, stupidity, and unbelief; had they attempted it with vigour and resolution, we have reason to think God would not have been wanting to them, to give them success; but they could not do it, because they would not. Jerusalem was afterwards to be the holy city, the royal city, the city of the great King, the brightest ornament of all the land of Israel, God hath designed it should be so. It may therefore be justly looked upon as a punishment of their neglect to conquer other cities God hath given them, that they were so long kept out of this.

Among the cities of Judah (in all one hundred and fourteen) we meet with Libnah, which in Joram's days revolted, and probably set up for a free independent state, 2 *Kings* viii. 22. and Lachish, where king Amaziah was slain, 1 *Kings* xiv. 19. it led the dance in idolatry, *Micah* i. 13. it was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion. Giloh, Achitophel's town, is here mentioned, and Tekoa, of which the prophet Amos was, and near which Jehoshaphat obtained that glorious victory, 2 *Chron.* xx. 20. and Marethah where Asa was a conqueror. Many of the cities of this tribe occur in the history of David's troubles. Adullam, Ziph, Keilah, Maon, Engedi, Ziklag, were places here reckoned in his tribe, near which David had most of his haunts; for though sometimes Saul drove him out from the inheritance of the Lord, yet he kept as close to it as he could. The wilderness of Judah he frequented much, and in it John Baptist preached, and there the kingdom of heaven commenced, *Matth.* iii. 1. The riches of this country, no doubt, answered Jacob's blessing of this tribe, that he should wash his garments in wine, *Gen.* xlix. 11. And in general, Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise, not envy.

C H A P. XVI.

It is pity this and the following chapter should be separated, for both of them give us the lot of the children of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, who, next to Judah, were to have the part of honour, and therefore had the first and best portion in the northern part of Canaan, as Judah now had in the southern part. In this chapter, we have, (1.) A general account of the lot of the two tribes together, ver. 1—4. (2.) The borders of the lot of Ephraim in particular, ver. 5—10. That of Manasseh following in the next chapter.

1. **A**ND the lot of the children of Joseph fell from Jordan by Jericho, under the water of Jericho on the east, to the wilderness that goeth up from Jericho, throughout mount Beth-el, 2. And goeth out from Beth-el to Luz, and passeth along unto the borders of Archi to Ataroth. 3. And goeth down west-ward to the coast of Japhleti, unto the coast of Beth-horon the nether, and to Gezer: and the goings out thereof are at the sea. 4. So the children of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, took their inheritance.

Though Joseph was one of the younger sons of Jacob, yet he was his eldest by his most just and best beloved wife, Rachel; was himself *his best beloved son*, and had been the greatest ornament and support of his family, kept it from perishing in a time of famine, and had been the *shepherd and stone of Israel*, and therefore his posterity were very much favoured by the lot. Their portion lay in the very heart of the land of Canaan. It extended from Jordan in the east, ver. 1. to the sea, the Mediterranean sea in the west, so that it took up the whole breadth of Canaan from side to side; and, no question, the fruitfulness of the soil answered the blessings both of Jacob and Moses, *Gen.* xlix. 25, 26. and *Deut.* xxxiii. 13.

The portions allotted to Ephraim and Manasseh, are not so particularly described as those of the other tribes: we have only the limits and boundaries of them, not the particular cities in them, as before we had the cities of Judah, and afterwards those of the ten tribes. For which no reason can be assigned, unless we may suppose that Joshua, being himself of the children of Joseph, they referred it to him alone to distribute among them the several cities that lay within their lot, and therefore did not bring in the names of their cities to the great council of their princes which sat upon this affair; by which means it came to pass that they were not inserted with the rest in the books.

5. ¶ And the border of the children of Ephraim, according to their families, was *thus*: even the border of their inheritance on the east-side, was Ataroth-addar unto Beth-horon the upper. 6. And the border went out toward the sea to Michmethah on the north-side, and the border went about east-ward unto Taanath-shiloh, and passed by it on the east to Janohah: 7. And it went down from Janohah to Ataroth and to Naarath, and came to Jericho, and went out at Jordan. 8. The border went out from Tappuah west-ward unto the river Kanah; and the goings out thereof were at the sea. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Ephraim by their families. 9. And the separate cities for the children of Ephraim were among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages. 10. And they drave not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute.

Here, 1. The border of the lot of Ephraim is set down, by which it was divided on the south from Benjamin and Dan, who lay between it and Judah, and on the north from Manasseh; for east and west it reached from Jordan and the great sea. The learned, who aim to be exact in drawing the line according to the directions here, find themselves very much at a loss, this

the description here being short and intricate. The report of those, who in these latter ages have travelled those countries, will not serve to clear the difficulties, so vastly unlike is it now to what it was then; not only cities have been so destroyed as that no mark or footstep of them remains, but brooks are dried up, rivers alter their courses, and *even the mountain falling cometh to naught, and the rock is removed out of its place*, Job xix. 18. Unless I could hope to solve the doubts that arise upon this draught of the border of Ephraim, it is to no purpose to mention them; no doubt, they were then perfectly understood, so as that the first intention of recording them was effectually answered, which was to notify the ancient landmarks, which posterity must by no means remove.

2. Some separate cities are spoken of that lay not within these borders, at least not of the line were drawn direct, but lay within the lot of Manasseh, ver. 9. which might better be read, *and there were separate cities for the children of Ephraim, among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh*, because it proved that Manasseh could spare them, and Ephraim had need of them; and it might be hoped that no inconvenience would arise from this mixture of these two tribes together, who were both the sons of Joseph, and should love as brethren. And by this appears, that though when the tribes were numbered in the plains of Moab, Manasseh had got the start of Ephraim in number, for Manasseh was then fifty-two thousand, and Ephraim but thirty-two thousand, Numb. xxvi. 3-4, 37. yet by that time they were well settled in Canaan, the hands were crossed again, and the blessing of Moses was verified, Deut. xxxiii. 17. *They are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh*. Families and kingdoms are diminished and increased, increased and diminished again, as God pleaseth.

3. A brand is put upon the Ephraimites, that they did not drive out the Canaanites from Gezer, ver. 10. Either through carelessness or cowardice, either for want of faith in the promise of God, that he would give them success if they would make a vigorous effort; or for want of zeal for the command of God, which obliged them utterly to drive out the Canaanite, and to make no peace with them. And though they hoped to satisfy the law by putting them under tribute, yet (as Calvin thinks) that made the matter worse, for it shews that they spared them out of covetousness, that they might be profited by their labours, and by dealing with them for their tribute they were in danger of being infected with their idolatry; yet some think, when they brought them under tribute, they obliged them to renounce their idols, and to observe the seven precepts of the sons of Noah; and I should think so, but that we find in the sequel of the story, that the Israelites were so far from restraining idolatry in others, that they soon fell into it themselves.

Many famous places were within this lot of the tribe of Ephraim, though not mentioned here. In it was Ramah, Samuel's city, called in the New Testament, Arimathea, of which Joseph was, that took care of our Saviour's burial, and Shiloh, where the tabernacle was first set up. Tirzah also, the royal city of Jeroboam and his successors. Deborah's palm-trees under which she judged Israel, was in this tribe. Samaria, built by Omri, after burning of the royal palace of Tirzah, was in this tribe, and was long the royal city of the kingdom of the ten tribes; not far from it was Shechem, and the mountains Ebal and Gerizzim, and Sychar, near which was Jacob's well, where Christ talked with the woman of Samaria. We read much of mount Ephraim in the story of the Judges, and of a city called Ephraim, it is probable in this tribe, to which Christ retired, John xi. 54. The whole kingdom of the ten tribes is often in the prophets, especially in Hosea, called Ephraim.

C H A P. XVII.

The half tribe of Manasseh comes next to be provided for; and here we have, 1. The families of that tribe that were to be portioned, ver. 1-6. 2. The country that fell to their lot, ver. 7-13. 3. The joint request of the two tribes that descended from Joseph, for the enlargement of their lot, and Joshua's answer to that request, ver. 14-18.

1. **T**HERE was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh (for he was the first-born of Joseph) to wit, for Machir the first-born of Manasseh, the father of Gilead: because he was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan. 2. There was also a lot for the rest of the children of Manasseh by their families; for the children of Abiezer, and for the children of Helek, and for the children of Afriel, and for the children of Shechem, and for the children of Hephher, and for the children of Shemida: these were the male children of Manasseh the son of Joseph by their families. 3. ¶ But Zelophehad the son of Hephir, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but daughters: and these are the names of his daughters, Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirza. 4. And they came near before Eleazar the priest, and before Joshua the son of Nun, and before the princes, saying, The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brethren: therefore according to the commandment of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among the brethren of their father. 5. And there fell ten portions to Manasseh, beside the land of Gilead and Bashan, which were on the other side Jordan; 6. Because the daughters of Manasseh had an inheritance among his sons: and the rest of Manasseh's sons had the land of Gilead.

Manasseh was itself but one half of the tribe of Joseph, and yet was divided and subdivided.

1. It was divided into two parts, one already settled on the other side Jordan, who were the posterity of Machir, ver. 1. This Machir was born to Manasseh in Egypt, there he had signalized himself as a man of war, probably in the encounters that were between the Ephraimites and the men of Gath, 1 Chron. vii. 21. His warlike disposition descended to his posterity, and therefore Moses gave them Gilead and Bashan, on the other side Jordan, of which before, chap. xiii. 31. It is here said, that the lot came from Manasseh, for he was the first-born of Joseph. Bishop Patrick thinks it should be translated, though he was the first-born of Joseph, and then the meaning is plain; that the second lot was for Manasseh, because though he was the first-born, yet Jacob had preferred Ephraim before him. See the names of those heads of the families that settled on the other side Jordan, 1 Chron. v. 24.

2. That part on this side Jordan was subdivided into ten families, ver. 5. There were six sons of Gilead here named, ver. 2. the same that are recorded Numb. xxvi. 30. only that he who is there called Jezeer; is here called Abiezer; five of these sons had each of them their portion; the sixth, which was Hephher, had his male line cut off in his son Zelophehad, who left daughters only, five in number, of whom we have often read, and these five had each of them a portion; though perhaps they claiming under Hephher, all their five portions were but equal to one of the portions of the five sons. Or if Hephher had other sons besides Zelophehad, in whom the name of his family was kept up, their posterity married to the daughters of Zelophehad the elder brother, and in their right had these portions assigned them. See Numb. xxxvi. 12.

Here is, 1. The claim which the daughters of Zelophehad made, grounded upon the command God gave to Moses concerning them, ver. 4. They had themselves, when they were young, pleaded their own cause before Moses, and obtained the grant of an inheritance with their brethren; and now they would not lose the benefit of that grant for want of speaking to Joshua, but seasonably put in their demand themselves, as it should seem, and not their husbands for them. 2. The assignment of their portions according to their claim; Joshua knew very well what God had ordered in their case, and did not object, that they having not served in the wars of Canaan, was no reason they should not share in the possessions of Canaan, but readily gave them an inheritance among the brethren of their father. And now they reaped the benefit of their own pious zeal and prudent forecast in this matter. Thus they who take care in the wilderness of this world to make sure to themselves a place in the inheritance of the saints in light, will certainly have the comfort of it in the other world, while those that neglect it now will lose it for ever.

7. ¶ And the coast of Manasseh was from Ashur to Michmetha, that lieth before Sechem, and the border went along on the right-hand unto the inhabitants of Entappuah. 8. Now Manasseh had the land of Tappuah: but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh belonged to the children of Ephraim. 9. And the coast descended unto the river Kanah, southward of the river: these cities of Ephraim are among the cities of Manasseh: the coast of Manasseh also was on the north side of the river, and the out-goings of it were at the sea. 10. Southward it was Ephraim's, and northward it was Manasseh's, and the sea is his border, and they met together in Asher on the north, and in Issachar on the east. 11. And Manasseh had in Issachar and in Asher, Beth-shean, and her towns, and Ibleam and her towns, and the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, and the inhabitants of En-dor and her towns, and the inhabitants of Taanach and her towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns, even three countries. 12. Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities, but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. 13. Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute; but did not utterly drive them out.

We have here a short account of the lot of this half-tribe. It reached from Jordan on the east, to the great sea on the west; on the south it lay all along contiguous to Ephraim, but on the north it abutted upon Asher and Issachar; Asher lay north-west, and Issachar north-east, which seems to be the meaning of that, ver. 10. that they (i. e. Manasseh and Ephraim, as related to it, both together making the tribe of Joseph) met in Asher on the north, and Issachar on the east, for Ephraim itself reached not those tribes.

Some things are particularly observed concerning this lot.

1. That there was a great communication between this tribe and that of Ephraim. The city of Tappuah belonged to Ephraim, but the country adjoining, to Manasseh, ver. 8. there were likewise many cities of Ephraim that lay within the border of Manasseh, ver. 9. of which before, chap. xvi. 9.

That Manasseh likewise had cities with their appurtenances in the tribes of Issachar and Asher, ver. 11. God so ordering it, that though each tribe had its peculiar inheritance, which might not be alienated from it, yet they should thus intermix one with another, to keep up mutual acquaintance and correspondence between the tribes, and to give occasion for the doing of good offices one to another, as became those, who, though different tribes, were also one Israel, and were bound to love as brethren.

3. That they suffered the Canaanites to live among them, contrary to the command of God, serving their own ends by conniving at them, for they made them tributaries, ver. 12, 13. The Ephraimites had done the same, chap. xvi. 10. and from them perhaps the Manassites learned it, and with their example excused themselves in it.

The most remarkable person of this half-tribe in after-time, was Gideon, whose great actions were done within this lot. He was of the family of Abiezer; Cefarea was in this lot, and Antipatris, famed in the latter ages of the Jewish state.

14. And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the LORD hath blessed me hitherto? 15. And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people then get thee up to the wood-country, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites, and of the giants, if mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee. 16. And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both they who are of Beth-shean and her towns, and they who are of the valley of Jezreel. 17. And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and to Manasseh, saying, Thou art a great people, and hast great power: thou shalt not have one lot only, 18. But the mountain

tain shall be thine, for it is a wood: and thou shalt cut it down: and the out-goings of it shall be thine; for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong.

Here, 1. The children of Joseph quarrel with their lot; if they had had any just cause to quarrel with it, we have reason to think Joshua would have relieved them, by adding to it, or altering it, which it doth not appear he did. It is probable, because Joshua was himself of the tribe of Ephraim, they promised themselves that they should have some particular favour shewed them, and should not be confined to the decision of the lot so closely as the other tribes; but Joshua makes them know that in the discharge of his office, as a public person, he had no more regard to his own tribe than to any other, but would administer impartially, without favour or affection; wherein he has left an excellent example to all in public trusts. It was a very competent provision that was made for them, as much, for ought appears, as they were able to manage, and yet they call it in disdain but one lot, as if that which was assigned to them both was scarce sufficient for one. The word for complainers (*Jude 16.*) is *μεταφρονῶντες*, blamers of their lot, like the children of Joseph, who would have that altered, the disposal whereof is from the Lord. Two things they suggest to enforce their petition for an augmentation of their lot. (1.) That they were very numerous, through the blessing of God upon them, *ver. 14. I am a great people, for the Lord has blessed me*; and we have reason to hope, that he that hath sent mouths will send meat. *I am a great people*, and in so small a lot shall not have room to thrive: Yet, observe, when they speak thankfully of their present increase, they do not speak confidently of the continuance of it; the Lord has blessed me hitherto, however he may see fit to deal with me for the future. The uncertainty of what may be, must not make us unthankful for what has been, and is done in kindness to us. (2.) That a good part of that country which was now fallen to their lot, was in the hands of the Canaanites, and that they were formidable enemies, who brought into the field of battle *chariots of iron*, *ver. 16. i. e. chariots with long scythes fastened to the sides of them, or the axle-tree, which made great destruction of all that came in their way, mowing them down like corn.* They urge, that though they had a good portion assigned them, yet it was in bad hands, and they could not come to the possession of it; wishing to have their lot in those countries that were more thoroughly reduced than this was.

2. Joshua endeavours to reconcile them to their lot; he owns they were *a great people*, and being two tribes, ought to have more than *one lot only*, *ver. 17.* but tells them, that what was fallen to their share would be a sufficient lot for them both, if they would but work and fight. They desired a lot in which they might indulge themselves in ease and luxury; no, saith Joshua, you must not count upon that, *in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread*, is a sentence in force, even in Canaan itself. He retorts their own argument, that they were a *great people*, if so, you are the better able to help yourselves, and have the less reason to expect help from others. If thou hast many mouths to be filled, thou hast twice as many hands to be employed; earn and then eat.

1. He bids them *work for more*, *ver. 15. Get thee up to the wood-country*, which is within thy own border, and let all hands be set on work to cut down the trees, rid the rough lands, and make them, with art and industry, good arable ground. Note, Many wish for larger possessions, who do not cultivate and make the best of what they have; think they should have more talents given them, who do not trade with those with which they are intrusted. Most people's poverty is the effect of their idleness; would they dig, they need not beg.

2. He bids them *fight for more*, *ver. 17, 18.* when they pleaded that they could not come at the wood-lands he spoke of because in the valley between them and it, there were Canaanites whom they durst not enter the list with: Never fear them, (saith Joshua) thou hast God on thy side, and thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, if thou wilt set about it in good earnest, though they have iron chariots. We straiten ourselves by apprehending the difficulties in the way of our enlargement greater than really they are. What can be insuperable to faith and holy resolution.

C H A P. XVIII.

In this chapter we have, 1. The setting up of the tabernacle at Shiloh, *ver. 1.* 2. The stirring up of the seven tribes that were yet unsettled to look after their lot, and the putting of them in a method for it, by Joshua, *ver. 2—7.* 3. The distributing of the land into seven lots, by certain men employed for that purpose, *ver. 8, 9.* 4. The determining of these seven portions to the seven tribes yet unprovided for by lot, *ver. 10.* 5. The particular lot of the tribe of Benjamin, the borders of it, *ver. 11—20.* And the cities contained in it, *ver. 21—28.* The other six tribes we shall find well provided for in the next chapter.

1. **A**ND the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there, and the land was subdued before them.

In the midst of the story of the dividing of the land, comes in this account of the setting up of the tabernacle, which had hitherto continued in its old place in the center of their camp; but now three of the four squadrons that used to surround it in the wilderness were broken and diminished, those of Judah, Ephraim, and Reuben, by the removal of those tribes to their respective possessions, and that of Dan only remained intire, it was time to think of removing the tabernacle itself into a city. Many a time the priests and Levites had taken it down, carried it, and set it up again in the wilderness according to the directions given them, *Numb. iv. 5, &c.* but now they must do it for good and all, not one of the stakes thereof must any more be removed, nor any of the cords thereof broken, *Isa. xxxiii. 20.* Observe,

1. The place to which the tabernacle was removed, and in which it was set up. It was Shiloh, a city in the lot of Ephraim, but lying close upon the lot of Benjamin. Doubtless God himself did some way or other direct them to this place, for he had promised to choose the place where he would make his name to dwell, *Deut. xii. 11.* It is most probable, God made known his mind in this matter by the judgment of Urim. This place was pitched upon; 1. Because it was in the heart of the country, nearer the center than Jerusalem was, and therefore the more convenient for the meeting of all Israel there from the several parts of the country; it had been in the midst of their camp in the wilderness, and therefore must now be in the midst of their nation, as that which sanctified the whole, and was the glory

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in the midst of them. See *Psal. xlv. 5.* 2. Because it was in the lot of that tribe of which Joshua was, who was now their chief magistrate, and it would be both for his honour and convenience, and for the advantage of the country, to have it near him. The testimony of Israel and the throne, of judgment do dwell together, *Psal. cxxii. 4, 5.* 3. Some think there was an eye to the name of the place, Shiloh being the name by which the Messiah was known, in dying Jacob's prophecy, *Gen. xlix. 10.* which prophecy, no doubt, was well known among the Jews; the setting up of the tabernacle in Shiloh, gave them a hint, that in that Shiloh, whom Jacob spoke of, all the ordinances of this worldly sanctuary should have their accomplishment in a greater and more perfect tabernacle, *Heb. ix. 1—11.* And Dr. Lightfoot thinks, that the place where the tabernacle was set up, was therefore called Shiloh, because of the peaceableness of the land at this time; as afterward in Salem was his temple, which also signifies peaceable.

2. The solemn manner of doing it. The whole congregation assembled together to attend the solemnity, to do honour to the ark of God, as the token of his presence, and to bid it welcome to its settlement. Every Israelite was interested in it, and therefore all testified their joy and satisfaction upon this occasion. See *2 Sam. vi. 15.* It is probable, those tribes that were yet encamped when the tabernacle was removed to Shiloh, decamped from Gilgal, and pitched about Shiloh, for every true Israelite will desire to fix where God's tabernacle fixeth. Mention is made on this occasion of the land's being subdued before them, to intimate, that the country, hereabouts at least, being thoroughly reduced, they met with no opposition, nor were they apprehensive of any danger, but thought it time to make this grateful acknowledgment of God's goodness to them in the constant series of successes with which he had blessed them. It was a good presage of a comfortable settlement to themselves in Canaan, when their first care was to see the ark well settled, as soon as they had a safe place ready to settle it in. Here the ark continued about three hundred and twenty-five years, till the sins of Eli's house forfeited the ark, lost it, and ruined Shiloh, and its ruins were long after made use of as warnings to Jerusalem; *Go, see what I did to Shiloh*, *Jer. vii. 12.* *Psal. lxxviii. 60.*

2. And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes, which had not yet received their inheritance. 3. And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, How long are you slack to go to possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers hath given you? 4. Give out from among you three men for each tribe: and I will send them, and they shall rise, and go through the land, and describe it according to the inheritance of them, and they shall come again to me. 5. And they shall divide it into seven parts: Judah shall abide in their coast on the south, and the house of Joseph shall abide in their coasts on the north. 6. Ye shall therefore describe the land into seven parts, and bring the description hither to me, that I may cast lots for you here before the LORD our God. 7. But the Levites have no part among you, for the priesthood of the LORD is their inheritance: and Gad, and Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh, have received their inheritance beyond Jordan on the east, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them. 8. ¶ And the men arose, and went away: and Joshua charged them that went to describe the land, saying, Go, and walk through the land, and describe it, and come again to me, that I may here cast lots for you before the LORD in Shiloh. 9. And the men went and passed through the land, and described it by cities into seven parts in a book, and came again to Joshua to the host at Shiloh. 10. ¶ And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD: and there Joshua divided the land unto the children of Israel, according to their divisions.

Here, 1. Joshua reproves those tribes who were yet unsettled, that they did not bestir themselves to gain a settlement in the land which God had given them. Seven tribes were yet unprovided for, though sure of an inheritance, yet uncertain where it should be, and it seems in no great care about it, *ver. 2.* And with them Joshua reasoneth, *ver. 3. How long are ye slack?* (1.) They were too well pleased with their present condition, liked well enough to live in a body together, the more the merrier, and, like the Babel-builders, had no mind to be scattered abroad, and break good company. The spoil of the cities they had taken, served them to live plentifully upon for the present, and they banished the thoughts of time to come. Perhaps, the tribes of Judah and Joseph, who had already received their inheritance in the countries next adjoining, were generous in entertaining their brethren, who were yet unprovided for, so that they went from one good house to another among their friends, with which, instead of grudging that they were postponed, they were so well pleased, that they cared not for going to houses of their own. (2.) They were slothful and dilatory: it may be they wished the thing done, but had not spirit to stir in it, or move towards the doing of it, though it was so much for their own advantage, like the sluggard, that hides his hand in his bosom, and it grieves him to bring it to his mouth again. The countries that remained to be divided lay at a distance, and some parts of them in the hands of the Canaanites. If they go to take possession of them the cities must be rebuilt or repaired, they must drive their flocks and herds a great way, and carry their wives and children to strange places; and this will not be done without care and pains, and breaking through some hardships; thus, *He that observes the wind shall not sow, and he that regards the clouds shall not reap*, *Eccles. xi. 4.* Note, Many are diverted from real duties, and debarred from real comforts, by seeming difficulties. God by his grace has given us a title to a good land, the heavenly Canaan, but we are slack to take possession, we enter not into that rest as we might by faith, and hope, and holy joy; we live not in heaven, as we might, by setting our affections on things above, and having our conversation there. How long shall it be thus with us? How long shall we thus stand in our own light, and for sake our own mercies for lying vanities? Joshua was sensible of the inconveniencies of this delay, that while they neglected to take possession of the land that was conquered, the Canaanites were recovering strength and spirit, and fortifying themselves in the places that were yet in their hands, which would make the total expulsion of them the more difficult. They would lose their advantages by not following their

blow; and therefore as an eagle stirreth up her nest, so Joshua stirs them up to take possession of their lot. He is ready to do his part, if they will but do theirs.

2. He puts them in a way to settle themselves. 1. The land that remained must be surveyed, an account taken of the cities, and the territories belonging to them, *ver. 4.* These must be divided into seven equal parts, as near as they could guess at their true value, which they must have an eye to, and not only to the number of the cities, and extent of the country. Judah is fixed on the south, and Joseph on the north of Shiloh, to protect the tabernacle, *ver. 5.* and therefore they need not describe their country, but those countries only that were yet undisposed of. He gives a reason, *ver. 7.* why they must divide it into seven parts only, because the Levites were to have no temporal estate (as we say) but their benefices only, which were intailed upon their families: *The priesthood of the Lord is their inheritance*, and a very honourable, comfortable, plentiful inheritance it was. God and Balaam, with half of the tribe of Manasseh, were already fixed, and needed not to have any further care taken of them. Now, (1.) The surveyors were three men out of each of the seven tribes that were to be provided for, *ver. 4.* one and twenty in all, who, perhaps for greater expedition, because they had already lost time, divided themselves into three companies, one of each tribe in each company, and took each their district to survey. The matter was thus referred equally, that there might be neither any partiality used in making up the seven lots, nor any umbrage or suspicion given, but all might be satisfied that they had right done them. (2.) The survey was accordingly made, and brought in to Joshua, *ver. 8, 9.* Josephus saith it was seven months in the doing. And we must in it observe, 1. The faith and courage of the persons employed, abundance of Canaanites remained in the land, and all raging against Israel, as a bear robbed of her whelps; the business of these surveyors would soon be known, and what could they expect but to be way-laid, and have their brains knocked out by the reprobates. But in obedience to Joshua's command, and in dependence upon God's power, they thus put their lives in their hands to serve their country. 2. The good providence of God in protecting them from the many deaths they were exposed to, and bringing them all safe again to the host at Shiloh. When we are in the way of our duty, we are under the special protection of the Almighty.

2. When it was surveyed, and reduced to seven lots, then Joshua would, by appeal to God, and direction from him, determine which of these lots should belong to each tribe, *ver. 6.* *That I may cast lots for you here at the tabernacle* (because it was a sacred transaction) *before the Lord our God*, to whom each tribe must have an eye with thankfulness for the conveniences, and submission to the inconveniences of their allotment. What we have in the world we must acknowledge God's property in, and dispose of it as before him, with justice and charity, and dependence upon providence. The heavenly Canaan is described to us in a book, the book of the scriptures, and there is in it mansions and portions sufficient for all God's spiritual Israel; Christ is our Joshua that divides it to us, on him we must attend, and to him we must apply ourselves, for an inheritance with the saints in light. See *John xvii. 2, 3.*

11. ¶ And the lot of the tribe of the children of Benjamin, came up according to their families: and the coast of their lot came forth between the children of Judah, and the children of Joseph. 12. And their border on the north-side was from Jordan, and the border went up to the side of Jericho, on the north-side, and went up through the mountains west-ward, and the goings-out thereof were at the wilderness of Beth-aven. 13. And the border went over from thence towards Luz, to the side of Luz, (which is Beth-el) south-ward, and the border descended to Atarothadar, near the hill that lieth on the south-side of the nether Beth-horon. 14. And the border was drawn thence, and compassed the corner of the sea south-ward, from the hill that lieth before Beth-horon south-ward: and the goings-out thereof were at Kirjath-baal (which is Kirjath-jearim) a city of the children of Judah: This was the west-quarter. 15. And the south-quarter was from the end of Kirjath-jearim, and the border went out on the west, and went out to the well of waters of Nephtoah. 16. And the border came down to the end of the mountain that lieth before the valley of the son of Hinnom, and which is in the valley of the giants on the north, and descended to the valley of Hinnom, to the side of Jebusi on the south, and descended to En-rogel, 17. And was drawn from the north, and went forth to En-she-mesh, and went forth toward Geliboth, which is over against the going up of Adummim, and descended to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben. 18. And passed along toward the side over against Arabah north-ward, and went down unto Arabah. 19. And the border passed along to the side of Beth-hoglah north-ward: and the out-goings of the border were at the north-bay of the salt-sea at the south-end of Jordan: this was the south-coast. 20. And Jordan was the border of it on the east-side. This was the inheritance of the children of Benjamin, by the coasts thereof round about, according to their families. 21. Now the cities of the tribe of the children of Benjamin according to their families, were Jericho, and Beth-hoglah, and the valley of Keziz, 22. And Beth-arabah, and Zemaraim, and Beth-el, 23. And Avim, and Parah, and Ophrah, 24. And Chephar-haammonai, and Ophni, and Gaba; twelve cities with their villages. 25. Gibeon, and Rama, and Beeroth, 26. And Mizpeh, and Chephirah, and Moza, 27. And Reken, and Irpeel, and Taralah, 28. And Zelah, Eleph, and Jebusi, (which is Jerusalem) Gibeah, and Kirjath: fourteen cities with

their villages. This is the inheritance of the children of Benjamin, according to their families.

We have here the lot of the tribe of Benjamin, which providence cast next to Joseph on the one hand, because Benjamin was oven and only brother to Joseph, and was little Benjamin, *Psalm lxxviii. 27.* that needed the protection of great Joseph, and yet had a better protector, for the Lord shall cover him all the day long, *Deut. xxxiii. 22.* And next to Judah, on the other hand, that this tribe might hereafter unite with Judah in an adherence to the throne of David, and the temple at Jerusalem.

Here is, 1. The exact borders and limits of this tribe, which we need not be exact in the explication of; as it had Judah on the south, and Joseph on the north, so it had Jordan on the east, and Dan on the west. The western border is said to compass the corners of the sea southward, *ver. 14.* whereas no part of the lot of this tribe came near to the great sea. Bishop Patrick thinks the meaning is, that it ran along in a parallel line to the great sea, though at a distance. Dr. Fuller suggests, that since it is not called the great sea, but only the sea, which often signifies any lake or mere, it may be meant of the pool of Gibeon, which may be called a corner or canton of the sea, it is called the great waters in Gibeon, *Jer. xli. 12.* and it is compassed by the western border of this tribe.

2. The particular cities in this tribe, not all, but the most considerable; twenty-six are here named. Jericho is put first, though dismantled, and forbidden to be rebuilt as a city with gates and walls, because it might be built and inhabited as a country village, and so was not useless to this tribe. Gilgal was in this tribe, where Israel first encamped when Saul was made king, *1 Sam. xi. 1 v.* It was afterwards a very profane place, *Hos. ix. 15.* *All their wickedness is in Gilgal.* Beth-el was in this tribe, a famous place; though Benjamin adhered to the house of David, yet Beth-el it seems was in the possession of the house of Joseph, *Judg. i. 25.* and there Jeroboam set up one of his calves. Gibeon was in this tribe, where the altar was in the beginning of Solomon's time, *2 Chron. i. 3.* Gibeah likewise, that infamous place where the Levite's concubine was abused. Mizpeh, and near it Samuel's Ebenezer; Anathoth also, Jeremiah's city, were in this tribe, as was the northern part of Jerusalem. Paul was the honour of this tribe, *Rom. xi. 1 Phil. iii. 5.* but where his land lay we know not, he fought the better country.

C H A P. XIX.

In the description of the lots of Judah and Benjamin we have an account both of the borders that surrounded them, and of the cities contained in them. In that of Ephraim and Manasseh we have the borders, but not the cities; in this chapter Simeon and Dan are described by their cities only, and not their borders, because they lay very much within Judah, especially the former; the rest have both their borders described, and their cities named, especially frontiers. Here is, (1.) The lot of Simeon, *ver. 1—9.* (2.) Of Zebulun, *ver. 10—16.* (3.) Of Issachar, *ver. 17—23.* (4.) Of Asher, *ver. 24—31.* (5.) Of Naphtali, *ver. 32—39.* (6.) Of Dan, *ver. 40—48.* Lastly, The inheritance assigned to Joshua himself and his own family, *ver. 49, 50, 51.*

1. **A**ND the second lot came forth to Simeon, even for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families: and their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah. 2. And they had in their inheritance Beer-sheba, and Sheba, and Moladah. 3. And Hazar-shual, and Balah, and Azem, 4. And Esthal, and Bethul, and Hormah. 5. And Ziglag, and Beth-markaboth, and Hafar-fusah, 6. And Beth-lebaoth, and Sharuben: thirteen cities and their villages. 7. Ain, Remmon, and Ether, and Ashan: four cities and their villages. 8. And all the villages that were round about these cities to Baalath-beer, Ramath of the south. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families. 9. Out of the portion of the children of Judah, was the inheritance of the children of Simeon: for the part of the children of Judah was too much for them: therefore the children of Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of them.

Simeon's lot was drawn after Judah's, Joseph's, and Benjamin's, because Jacob had put that tribe under disgrace, yet it is put before the two younger sons of Leah and the three sons of the hand-maids. Not one person of note, either judge or prophet, was of the tribe, that we know of.

1. The situation of their lot was within that of Judah, *ver. 1.* and was taken from it, *ver. 9.* It seems they that first surveyed the land, thought it bigger than it was, and that it would have held out, to give every tribe in proportion as large a share as they had carved out for Judah; but upon a more strict inquiry it was found that it would not reach, *ver. 9.* the part of the children of Judah was too much for them, more than they needed, and more as it proved than fell to their share. Yet God did not by the lot lessen it, but left it to their prudence and care afterwards to discover and rectify the mistake, which when they did. (1.) The men of Judah did not oppose the taking away of the cities again, which by the first distribution fell within their border, when they were convinced that they had more than their proportion. In all such cases errors must be excepted, and a review admitted if there be occasion. Though in strictness what fell to their lot was their right against all the world, yet they would not insist upon it, when it appeared that another tribe would want what they had to spare. Note, We must look on the things of others, and not on our own only. The abundance of some must supply the wants of others, that there may be something of an equality, for which there may be equity where there is not law. (2.) That which was thus taken off from Judah to be put into a new lot, providence directed to the tribe of Simeon, that Jacob's prophecy concerning this tribe might be fulfilled, *I will divide them in Jacob.* The cities of Simeon were scattered in Judah, with which tribe they were surrounded on either side by the sea. This brought them into a confederacy with the tribe of Judah, *Judg. i. 3.* and afterwards was a happy occasion of the adherence of many of his tribe to the house of David, at the time of

of the revolt of the ten tribes to Jeroboam, 2 Chron. xv. 9. *out of Simeon they fell to Asa in abundance.* It is good being in a good neighbourhood.

2. The cities within their lot are here named, Beersheba, or Sheba, for they seem to be the same place, is put first, Ziklag is one of them which we read of in David's story. What course they took to enlarge their borders and make room for themselves, we find 1 Chron. iv. 39, &c.

10. ¶ And the third lot came up for the children of Zebulun, according to their families: and the border of their inheritance was unto Sarid, 11. And their border went up toward the sea, and Maralah, and reached to Dabbatheth, and reached to the river that is before Jokneam. 12. And turned from Sarid east-ward, toward the sun-rising, unto the border of Chilloth-tabor, and then going out to Daberath, and goeth up to Japhia, 13. And from thence passeth on along on the east to Gittah-hepher, to Ittah-kazin, and goeth out to Remmon-methoar to Neah. 14. And the border compasseth it on the north-side to Hannathon: and the out-goings thereof are in the valley of Jiphthah-el. 15. And Kattah, and Nahallel, and Shimron, and Idalah, and Beth-lehem: twelve cities with their villages. 16. This is the inheritance of the children of Zebulun, according to their families, these cities with their villages.

This is the lot of Zebulun, who though born of Leah after Issachar, yet was blessed by Jacob and Moses before him, and therefore it was so ordered, that his lot was drawn before that of Issachar's, north of which it lay, and south of Asher.

1. The lot of this tribe was washed by the great sea on the west, and by the sea of Tiberias on the east, answering Jacob's prophecy, Gen. xlix. 13. *Zebulun shall be an haven of ships,* trading ships on the great sea, and fishing ships on the sea of Galilee.

2. Though there were some places in this tribe which were made famous in the Old Testament, especially mount Carmel, on which the famous trial was between God and Baal in Elijah's time, yet it was made much more illustrious in the New Testament, for within the lot of this tribe was Nazareth, where our blessed Saviour spent so much of his time on earth, and from which he was called *Jesus of Nazareth*: and mount Tabor on which he was transfigured, and that coast of the sea of Galilee on which Christ preached so many sermons, and wrought so many miracles.

17. ¶ And the fourth lot came out to Issachar, for the children of Issachar, according to their families. 18. And their border was toward Jezreel, and Chesulloth, and Shunem, 19. And Hapharaim, and Shion, and Anaharath, 20. And Rabbith, and Kithion, and Abez, 21. And Remeth, and Engannim, and Enhaddah, and Beth-pazzez. 22. And the coast reacheth to Tabor, Shaliazimah, and Beth-shemesh, and the out-goings of their border were at Jordan: sixteen cities with their villages. 23. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Issachar, according to their families: the cities and their villages.

The lot of Issachar ran from Jordan in the east, to the great sea in the west, and Manasseh on the south, and Zebulun on the north. A numerous tribe, Num. xxvi. 25. Tola, one of the judges, was of this tribe, Judg. x. 1. So was Baasha, one of the kings of Israel, 1 Kings xv. 27. The most considerable places in this tribe, were, 1. Jezreel, in which was Ahab's palace, and near it Naboth's vineyard. 2. Shunem, where lived the good Shunamite that entertained Elisha. 3. The river of Kishon, on the banks of which, in this tribe, Sisera was beaten by Deborah and Barak. 4. The mountains of Gilboa, on which Saul and Jonathan were slain, which were not far from Endor, where Saul consulted the witch. 5. The valley of Megiddo, where Josiah was slain near Hadad-rimmon, 2 Kings xxiii. 29. Eccl. xii. 11.

24. ¶ And the fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher, according to their families. 25. And their border was Helkath, and Hali, and Beten, and Achshaph, 26. And Alammelech, and Amad, and Misheal, and reacheth to Carmel westward, and to Shihorlibnath, 27. And turneth toward the sun-rising to Beth-dagon, and reacheth to Zebulun, and to the valley of Jiphthah-el toward the north-side of Beth-emek, and Neiel, and goeth out to Cabul on the left hand, 28. And Hebron, and Rehob, and Hammon: and Kanah, even unto great Zidon: 29. And then the coast turneth to Ramah, and to the strong city Tyre, and the coast turneth to Hofah: and the outgoings thereof are at the sea, from the coast to Achzib. 30. Ummah also, and Aphek, and Rehob: twenty and two cities with their villages. 31. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Asher, according to their families, these cities with their villages.

The lot of Asher lay upon the coast of the great sea; we read not of any famous person of this tribe, but Anna the prophetess, who was a constant resident in the temple at the time of our Saviour's birth, Luke ii. 36. nor were there many famous places in this tribe. Aphek, mentioned ver. 30. was the place near which Benhadad was beaten by Ahab, 1 Kings xx. 30. But close adjoining to this tribe were the celebrated sea-port towns of Tyre and Sidon, which we read so much of. Tyre is called here that strong city, ver. 29. but Bishop Patrick thinks it was not the same Tyre which we read of afterwards, for that was built on an island; this old strong city on the continent. And it is conjectured by some, that into these two strong-holds,

Sidon and Tzor, or Tyre, many of the people of Canaan fled, and took shelter when Joshua invaded them.

32. ¶ The sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali: even for the children of Naphtali, according to their families. 33. And their coast was from Heleph, from Allon to Zaanannim, and Adami, Nekeb, and Jabneel unto Lakum: and the out-goings thereof were at Jordan. 34. And then the coast turneth westward to Aznoth-tabor, and goeth out from thence to Hukkok, and reacheth to Zebulun on the south-side, and reacheth to Asher on the west-side, and to Judah upon Jordan toward the sun-rising. 35. And the fenced cities are Ziddim, Zer, and Hammath, Rakkath, and Cinnereth, 36. And Adamah, and Ramah, and Hazor. 37. And Kedesh, and Edrei, and Enhazor, 38. And Iron, and Migdal-el, Horem, and Beth-anath, and Beth-shemesh: nineteen cities with their villages. 39. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Naphtali, according to their families, the cities and their villages.

Naphtali lay farthest north of all the tribes, bordering on mount Libanus. The city of Leshem, or Laish, lay on the utmost edge of it to the north; and therefore when the Danites had made themselves masters of it, and called it Dan, the length of Canaan from north to south was reckoned from Dan to Beersheba. It had Zebulun on the south, Asher on the west, and Judah upon Jordan, probably a city of that name, and so distinguished from the tribe of Judah on the east. It was in the lot of this tribe, near the waters of Merom, that Joshua fought and routed Jabin, chap. xi. 1, &c. In this tribe stood Capernaum and Bethsaida, on the north end of the sea of Tiberias, in which Christ did so many mighty works; and the mountain (as is supposed) on which Christ preached, Matt. v. 1.

40. ¶ And the seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan, according to their families: 41. And the coast of their inheritance was Zorah, and Eshtaol, and Ir-shemesh, 42. And Shaalabbin, and Ajalon, and Jethlah, 43. And Elon, and Thimnathah, and Ekron, 44. And Eltekeh, and Gibbethon, and Baalath, 45. And Jehud, and Bene-berak, and Gath-rimmon, 46. And Me-jarkon, and Rakkon, with the border before Jephthah. 47. And the coast of the children of Dan went out too little for them: therefore the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and possessed it, and dwelt therein, and called Leshem Dan, after the name of Dan their father. 48. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Dan, according to their families, these cities with their villages.

Dan, though commander of one of the four squadrons of the camp of Israel in the wilderness, that which brought up the rear, yet was last provided for in Canaan, and his lot fell in the southern part of Canaan, between Judah on the east, and the land of the Philistines on the west; Ephraim on the north, and Simeon on the south. Providence ordered this numerous and puissant tribe into a post of danger, as best able to deal with those vexatious neighbours the Philistines, and so it was found in Samson.

Here is, 1. An account of what fell to this tribe by lot, Zorah and Eshtaol, and the camp of Dan thereabouts, we read of in the story of Samson. And near there was the valley of Eshtaol, whence the spies brought the famous bunch of grapes. Japho or Joppa was in this lot.

2. An account of what they got by their own industry and valour, which is mentioned here, ver. 47. but related at large, Judg. xviii. 7, &c.

49. ¶ When they had made an end of dividing the land for inheritance by their coasts, the children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun among them: 50. According to the word of the LORD they gave him the city which he asked, even Timnath-herah in mount Ephraim, and he built the city, and dwelt therein. 51. These are the inheritances which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, divided for an inheritance by lot, in Shiloh before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: so they made an end of dividing the country.

Before this account of the dividing of the land is solemnly closed up, in the last verse, which intimates that the thing was done to the satisfaction of all, here is an account of the particular inheritance assigned to Joshua.

1. He was last served, though the eldest and greatest man of all Israel, and who having commanded in the conquest of Canaan, might have demanded the first settlement in it for himself and his family. But he would make it to appear that in all he did he sought the good of his country, and not any private interest of his own. He was content to be unfixed till he saw them all placed; and herein is a great example to all in public places, to prefer the common welfare before their particular satisfaction. Let the public first be served.

2. He had his lot according unto the word of the Lord; it is probable, when God by Moses told Caleb what inheritance he should have, Josh. xiv. 9. he gave the like promise to Joshua, which he had an eye to in making his election, which made his portion doubly pleasant, that he had it, not as the rest, by common providence, but by special promise.

3. He chose it in mount Ephraim, which belonged to his own tribe, with which he thereby put himself in common, when he might by prerogative

tive have chosen his inheritance in some other tribe, as suppose that of Judah, and thereby have distinguished himself from them. Let no man's preferment or honour make him ashamed of his family or country, or estrange him from it. The tabernacle was set up in the lot of Ephraim, and Joshua would forecast not to be far from that.

4. The children of Israel are said to give it him, ver. 19. which speaks his humility, that he would not take it to himself without the people's consent and approbation, as if he would thereby own himself though *major singulus yet minor universis*, and would hold even the estate of his family under God, by the grant of the people.

5. It was a city that must be built before it was fit to be dwelt in: while others dwelt in houses which they builded not, Joshua must build for himself, that he might be a pattern of industry and contentment with mean things; such building as he could hastily run up, without curiosity or magnificence. Our Lord Jesus thus came and dwelt among us, not in pomp but poverty, providing rest for us, yet himself not having where to lay his head. Even Christ pleased not himself.

C H A P. XX.

This short chapter is concerning the cities of refuge, which we often read of in the writings of Moses, but this is the last time that we find mention of them, for now that matter was thoroughly settled. Here is, (1.) The law of God gave concerning them, ver. 1—6. (2.) The peoples designation of the particular cities for that use, ver. 7, 8, 9. And this remedial law was a figure of good things to come.

1. **THE LORD** also spake unto Joshua, saying, 2. Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: 3. That the slayer that killeth any person unawares, and unwittingly, may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. 4. And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities, shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city; they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place that he may dwell among them. 5. And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand: because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated not beforetime. 6. And he shall dwell in that city, until he stands before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high-priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come into his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled.

Many things were by the law of Moses ordered to be done when they came to Canaan, and this among the rest, the appointing of sanctuaries for the protecting of those who were guilty of casual murder; which was a privilege to all Israel, since no man could be sure but some time or other it might be his own case, and it was for the interest of the land, that the blood of an innocent person, whose hand only was guilty, but not his heart, should not be shed, no not by the avenger of blood: of this law God here reminds them, which was so much for their advantage, that they might mind themselves of the other laws he had given them, which concerned his honour.

(1.) Orders are given for the appointing of these cities, ver. 2. and very seasonable at this time when the land was newly surveyed, and so they were the better able to divide the coasts of it into three parts, as God had directed them, in order to the more convenient situation of these cities of refuge, Deut. xix. 3. Yet, it is probable, it was not done till after the Levites had their portion assigned them in the next chapter, because the cities of refuge were all to be Levites cities. As soon as ever God had given them cities of rest, he bid them appoint cities of refuge, to which none of them knew but they might be glad to escape. Thus God provided not only for their ease at all times, but for their safety in times of danger, and such times we must expect and prepare for in this world. And it intimates what God's spiritual Israel have and shall have in Christ and heaven, not only rest to repose themselves in, but refuge to secure themselves in. And we cannot think these cities of refuge should be so often and so much spoken of in the law of Moses, and so much care taken about them, when the intention of them might have been effectually answered, as it is in our law, by authorising the courts of judgment to protect and acquit the manslayer in all those cases wherein he was to have privilege of sanctuary, if they were not designed to typify the relief which the gospel provides for poor penitent sinners, and their protection from the curse of the law, and the wrath of God, in our Lord Jesus, to whom believers flee for refuge, Heb. vi. 18. and in whom they are found, Phil. iii. 9. as in a sanctuary, where they are privileged from arrests, and there is now no condemnation for them, Rom. viii. 1.

2. Instructions are given for the using of these cities. The law in this matter we had before, Num. xxxv. 10, &c. where they were opened at large.

1. It is supposed that a man might possibly kill a person, it may be his own child, or dearest friend, unawares and unwittingly, ver. 3. not only whom he hated not, but whom he truly loved, beforetime. ver. 5. for the way of man is not in himself. What reason have we to thank God who has kept us both from slaying, and from being slain by accident? in this case it is supposed, that the relations of the person slain would demand the life of the slayer, in satisfaction to that ancient law, that *who so sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed*.

2. It is provided, that if upon trial it appeared that the murder was done purely by accident, and not by design, either upon an old grudge or a sudden passion, then the slayer should be sheltered from the avenger of blood in any one of these cities, ver. 4, 6. By this law he was intitled to a dwelling in that city, was taken into the care of the government of it, but was confined to it, as a prisoner at large; only if he survived the high-priest, then, and not till then, he might return to his own city. And the Jews say, if he died before the high-priest in the city of his refuge and exile, and was buried there, yet at the death of the high-priest his bones should be removed with respect to the place of his father's sepulchres.

7. ¶ And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee, in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjath-arba (which is Hebron) in the mountain of Judah. 8. And on the other side Jordan by Jericho east-ward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain, out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh. 9. These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever killeth any person at unawares, might flee thither and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation.

We have here the nomination of the cities of refuge in the land of Canaan, which was done by the advice and authority of Joshua and the princes, ver. 7. and upon occasion of the mention of this, is repeated the nomination of the other three in the lot of the other two tribes and a half, which was done by Moses, Deut. iv. 43. but (as Bishop Patrick thinks) they had not the privilege till now.

1. They are said to sanctify these cities, that is the original word for appointed, ver. 7. Not that any ceremony was used to signify the consecration of them, only they did by a public act of court solemnly declare them cities of refuge; and as such sacred to the honour of God, as the protector of exposed innocency. If they were sanctuaries, it was proper to lay, they were sanctified. Christ, our refuge, was sanctified by his Father, nay, for our sakes he sanctified himself, John xvii. 19.

2. These cities (as those also on the other side Jordan) stood in the three several parts of the country, so conveniently that a man might (they say) in half a day reach some one of them from any corner of the country. Kedesh was in Naphtali, the most northern tribe, Hebron in Judah the most southern, and Shechem in Ephraim, which lay in the middle, about equally distant from the other two. God is a refuge at hand.

3. They were all Levites cities, which put an honour upon God's tribe, making them judges in those cities wherein divine providence was so nearly concerned, and protectors to oppressed innocency; it was also a kindness to the poor refugee, that when he might not go up to the house of the Lord, nor tread his courts, yet he had the servants of God's house with him, to instruct him, and pray for him, and help to make up the want of public ordinances. If he must be confined, it shall be to a Levite city, where he may if he will improve his time.

4. These cities were upon hills to be seen afar off, for a city on a hill cannot be hid; and this would both direct and encourage the poor distressed man that was making that way; and though therefore his way at last was up-hill, yet this would comfort him, that he would be in his place of safety quickly; and if he could but get into the suburbs of the city, he was well enough.

5. Some observe a significancy in the names of these cities with application to Christ our refuge. I delight not in quibbling upon names, yet am willing to take notice of these. Kedesh signifies holy, and our refuge is the holy Jesus. Shechem a shoulder, and the government is upon his shoulder. Hebron fellowship, and believers are called into the fellowship of Christ Jesus our Lord. Bezer a fortification, for he is a strong-hold to all them that trust in him. Ramoth, high or exalted, for him hath God exalted with his own right-hand. Golan, joy or exultation, for in him all the saints are justified and shall glory.

Lastly, Besides all these, the horns of the altar, wherever it was, were a refuge to those who took hold on them, if the crimes were such as that sanctuary was allowed. This is implied in that law, Exod. xxi. 14, that a wilful murderer shall be taken from God's altar to be put to death. And we find the altar used for this purpose, 1 Kings i. 50.—ii. 28. Christ is our altar, who not only sanctifies the gifts, but protects the giver.

C H A P. XXI.

It hath been often said that the tribe of Levi should have no inheritance with their brethren, no particular part of the country assigned them, as the other tribes had, no not the country about Shiloh, which one would have expected should have been appropriated to them as the lands of the church; but though they were not thus cast into a country by themselves, it appears, by the provision made for them in this chapter, that they were no losers, but the rest of the tribes were very much gainers by their being dispersed. We have here, 1. The motion they made to have their cities assigned them, according to God's appointment, ver. 1, 2. 2. The nomination of the cities accordingly out of the several tribes, and the distribution of them to their respective families of this tribe, ver. 3—8. 3. A catalogue of the cities, forty-eight in all, ver. 9—42. 4. A receipt entered in full of all that God had promised to his people Israel, ver. 43—45.

1. **THEN** came near the heads of the fathers of the Levites unto Eleazar the priest, and unto Joshua the son of Nun, and unto the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel. 2. And they spake unto them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, The LORD commanded by the hand of Moses, to give us cities to dwell in, with the suburbs thereof for our cattle. 3. And the children of Israel gave unto the Levites out of their inheritance at the commandment of the LORD, these cities and their suburbs. 4. And the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites: and the children of Aaron the priest which were of the Levites, had by lot, out of the tribe of Judah, and out of the tribe of Simeon, and out of the tribe of Benjamin, thirteen cities. 5. And the rest of the children of Kohath had by lot, out of the families of the tribe of Ephraim, and out of the tribe of Dan, and out of the half-tribe of Manasseh, ten cities. 6. And the children of Gershon had by lot, out of the families of the tribe of Issachar, and out of the tribe of Ashur, and

out of the tribe of Naphtali, and out of the half-tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, thirteen cities. 7. The children of Merari by their families, *had* out of the tribe of Reuben, and out of the tribe of Gad, and out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities. 8. And the children of Israel gave by lot unto the Levites these cities with their suburbs, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.

Here is, 1. The Levites petition presented to this general convention of the states, now sitting at Shiloh, *ver.* 1, 2. Observe,

1. They had not their lot assigned them, till they made their claim. There is an inheritance provided for all the saints, that royal priesthood, but then they must petition for it; *ziff and it shall be given you.* Joshua had quickened the rest of the tribes, who were slack to put in their claims, but the Levites may be supposed to know their duty and interest better than the rest, and were therefore forward in this matter, when it came to their turn, without being called upon. They build their claim upon a very good foundation, not their own merits or services, but the divine precept, *the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities*; commanded you to grant them, which implied a command to us to ask them. Note, The maintenance of ministers is not an arbitrary thing, left purely to the good-will of the people, who may let them starve if they please; no, as the God of Israel commanded that the Levites should be well provided for, so hath the Lord Jesus, the king of the Christian Church, ordained, and a perpetual ordinance it is, that *they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel*, 1 Cor. ix. 14. and should live comfortably.

2. They did not make their claim till all the rest of the tribes were provided for, and then they did it immediately. There was something of reason for it, every tribe must first know their own, else they would not know what they gave the Levites, and so it could not be such a reasonable service as it ought to be. But is also an instance of their humility, modesty, and patience, (and Levites should be examples of these and other virtues) that they were willing to be served last, and they feared never the worse for it. Let not God's ministers complain if at any time they find themselves postponed in men's thoughts and cares, but let them make sure of the favour of God, and the honour that comes from him, and then they may well enough afford to bear the slights and neglects of men.

3. The Levites petition was granted immediately, without any dispute; the princes of Israel being perhaps ashamed that they needed to be called upon in this matter, and that the motion had not been made among themselves for the settling of the Levites.

1. The children of Israel are said to give the cities for the Levites. God had appointed how many they should be in all, forty-eight. It is probable, Joshua, and the princes, upon consideration of the extent and value of the lot of each tribe, as it was laid before them, had appointed how many cities should be taken out of each; and then the fathers of the several tribes themselves agreed which they should be, and therefore are said to give them, as an offering to the Lord; for God had appointed, *Numb. xxxv. 8. Every one shall give of his cities to the Levites.* Here God tried their generosity, and it was found to praise and honour, for it appears by the following catalogue, that the cities they gave to the Levites were generally some of the best and most considerable in each tribe. And it is probable, they had an eye to the situation of them, taking care they should be so dispersed, as that no part of the country should be too far distant from a Levite's city.

2. They gave them at the commandment of the Lord, *i. e.* with an eye to the command, and in obedience to it, which was it that sanctified the grant. They gave the number that God commanded, and it was all well that the matter was settled, that the Levites might not ask more, nor the Israelites offer less. They gave them also with their suburbs, or glebe-lands belonging to them, so many cubits by measure from the walls of the city as God had commanded, *Numb. xxxv. 4, 5.* and did not go about to cut them short.

3. When the forty-eight cities were pitched upon, they were divided into four lots, as they lay next together, and then by lot were determined to the four several families of the tribe of Levi. When the Israelites had surrendered the cities into the hand of God, he would himself have the distributing of them among his servants. 1. The family of Aaron, who were the only priests, had to their share the thirteen cities that were given by the tribes Judah, Simeon and Benjamin, *ver. 4.* God in wisdom ordered it thus, that though Jerusalem itself was not one of their cities, it being as yet in the possession of the Jebusites, and those generous tribes would not mock the Levites, who had another warfare to mind, with a city that must be recovered by the sword before it could be enjoyed, yet the cities that fell to their lot were those which lay next to Jerusalem, because that was to be in process of time the holy city, where their business would chiefly lie.

2. The Kohathite Levites (among whom were the posterity of Moses, though never distinguished from them) had the cities that lay in the lot of Dan (which lay next to Judah) and in that of Ephraim, and the half-tribe of Manasseh (that lay next to Benjamin.) So they who descended from Aaron's father joined nearest to Aaron's sons. 3. Gershon was the eldest son of Levi, and therefore though the younger house of the Kohathites was preferred before his, yet his children had the precedence of the other family of Merari, *ver. 6.* 4. The Merarites, the youngest house, had their lot last, and it lay farthest off, *ver. 7.* The rest of the sons of Jacob had a lot for every tribe only, but Levi, God's tribe, had for a lot for each of its families; for there is a particular providence directing and attending the removes and settlements of ministers, and appointing where they shall fix, who are to be the lights of the world.

9. ¶ And they gave out of the tribe of the children of Judah, and out of the tribe of the children of Simeon, these cities which are here mentioned by name. 10. Which the children of Aaron, being of the families of the Kohathites, who were of the children of Levi, had: (for theirs was the first lot. 11. And they gave them the city of Arbah, the father of Anak (which city is Hebron) in the hill-country of Judah, with the suburbs thereof round about it. 12. But the fields of the city, and the villages thereof, gave they to Caleb the son of Jephunneh, for his possession. 13. ¶ Thus they gave to the children of Aaron the priest, Hebron with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer, and Libnah with her suburbs, 14. And Jattir with her suburbs, No. XXXV.

and Eshtemoa, with her suburbs, 15. And Holon with her suburbs, and Debir with her suburbs, 16. And Ain with her suburbs, and Juttah with her suburbs, and Beth-shemesh with her suburbs: nine cities out of those two tribes. 17. And out of the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with her suburbs, Geba with her suburbs, 18. Anathoth with her suburbs, and Almon with her suburbs: four cities. 19. All the cities of the children of Aaron, the priest, were thirteen cities with their suburbs. 20. ¶ And the families of the children of Kohath, the Levites, which remained of the children of Kohath, even they had the cities of their lot, out of the tribe of Ephraim. 21. For they gave them Shechem with her suburbs in mount Ephraim, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Gezer with her suburbs, 22. And Kibzaim with her suburbs, and Beth-horon with her suburbs: four cities. 23. And out of the tribe of Dan, Eltekeh with her suburbs, Gibbethon with her suburbs. 24. Aijalon with her suburbs, Gath-rimmon with her suburbs: four cities. 25. And out of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Tanach with her suburbs, and Gath-rimmon with her suburbs: two cities. 26. All the cities were ten with their suburbs, for the families of the children of Kohath that remained. 27. ¶ And unto the children of Gershon, of the families of the Levites, out of the other half-tribe of Manasseh, they gave Golan in Bashan with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer: and Beeshterah with her suburbs: two cities. 28. And out of the tribe of Issachar, Kishon with her suburbs, Dabareh with her suburbs. 29. Jarmuth with her suburbs, En-gannim with her suburbs: four cities. 30. And out of the tribe of Asher, Mishal with her suburbs, Abdon with her suburbs, 31. Helkath with her suburbs, and Rehob with her suburbs: four cities. 32. And out of the tribe of Naphtali, Kedesh in Galilee with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Hammothdor with her suburbs, and Kartan with her suburbs: three cities. 33. All the cities of the Gershonites, according to their families, were thirteen cities with their suburbs. 34. ¶ And unto the families of the children of Merari the rest of the Levites, out of the tribe of Zebulun, Joknean with her suburbs, and Kartah with her suburbs, 35. Dimnah with her suburbs, Nahalah with her suburbs: four cities. 36. And out of the tribe of Reuben, Bezer with her suburbs, and Jahaza with her suburbs, 37. Kedemoth with her suburbs, and Mephaath with her suburbs: four cities. 38. And out of the tribe of Gad, Ramoth in Gilead with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer: and Mahanaim with her suburbs: 39. Heshbon with her suburbs, Jazer with her suburbs: four cities in all. 40. So all the cities for the children of Merari by their families which were remaining of the families of the Levites, were by their lot, twelve cities. 41. All the cities of the Levites, within the possession of the children of Israel, were forty and eight cities with their suburbs. 42. These cities were every one with their suburbs round about them: thus were all these cities.

We have here a particular account of the cities which were given to the children of Levi, out of the several tribes, not only to be occupied and inhabited by them, as tenants to the several tribes in which they lay; no, their interest in them was not dependant and precarious, but to be owned and possessed by them as lords and proprietors, and as having the same title to them that the rest of the tribes had to their cities or lands; as appears by the law which preserved the houses in the Levites cities from being alienated any longer than till the year of Jubilee, *Lev. xxv. 32, 33.* Yet it is probable, that the Levites having only the cities and suburbs, while the land about pertained to the tribes in which they lay, those of that tribe, for the convenience of occupying that land, might commonly rent houses of the Levites, as they could spare them in the cities, and so live among them as their tenants.

Several things may be observed in this account, besides what was observed in the law concerning it, *Numb. xxxv.*

1. That the Levites were dispersed into all the tribes, and not suffered to live all together in any one part of the country, this would find them all with work, and employ them all for the good of others; for ministers of all people was neither be idle nor live to themselves, or to one another only. Christ left his twelve disciples together in a body, but left orders that they should in due time disperse themselves, that they might preach the gospel to every creature. The mixing of the Levites thus with the other tribes, would be an obligation upon them to walk circumspectly, and as became their sacred function, and to avoid every thing that might disgrace it. Had they lived all together, they would have been tempted to wink at one another's faults, and to excuse one another when they did amiss; but by this means they were made to see the eyes of Israel upon them, and therefore saw it their concern to walk so as their ministry might in nothing be blamed, nor their high character suffer by their ill carriage.

2. That every tribe of Israel was adorned and enriched with its share of Levites, in proportion to its compact, even those that lay most remote. They were all God's people, and therefore they had all Levites among them. 1. To shew kindness to, as God appointed them, *Deut. xii. 19.*

xiv. 29. They were God's receivers, to whom the people might give their grateful acknowledgements of God's goodness, as the occasion and disposition was. 2. To receive advice and instruction from: when they could not go up to the tabernacle to consult those who attended there, they might go to a Levite's city, and be taught the good knowledge of the Lord. Thus God set up a candle in every room of his house, to give light to all his family. As those that attended the altar kept the charge of the Lord, to see that no divine appointment was neglected there; so they that were scattered in the country had their charge too, which was to see that no idolatrous, superstitious usages were introduced at a distance, and to watch for the souls of God's Israel. Thus did God graciously provide for the keeping up of religion among them, and that they might have the word nigh them; yet, blessed be God, we under the gospel have it nigher, not only Levites in every country, but Levites in every parish, whose office is still to teach the people knowledge, and to go before them in the things of God.

3. That here were thirteen cities, and those some of the best, appointed for the priests, the sons of Aaron, ver. 19. Aaron left but two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, yet his family was now so well increased, and it was foreseen it would in process of time grow to numerous, as to replenish all these cities; though a considerable number of necessity be resident wherever the ark and altar were. We read in both Testaments of such numbers of priests, that we may suppose none of all the families of Israel that came out of Egypt increased afterwards so much as that of Aaron did; and the promise afterwards to the house of Aaron, is, *God shall increase you more and more, and your children*, Psal. cxy. 12—14. He will raise up a seed to serve him.

4. That some of the Levites cities were afterwards famous upon other accounts. Hebron was the city in which David began his reign; and in Mahanaim, another Levites city, ver. 38. he lay, and had his head-quarters when he fled from Absalom. The first Irachites that ever wore the title of king, viz. Abimelech, the son of Gideon, reigned in Shechem, another Levites city, ver. 21.

5. That the number of them in all was more than most of the tribes, except Judah, though the tribe of Levi was one of the least of the tribes; to shew how liberal God is, and his people should be to his ministers: yet the disproportion will not appear so great as at first it seems, if we consider that the Levites had cities only with their suburbs to dwell in, but the rest of the tribes, besides their cities (and those perhaps were many more than are named in the account of their lot) had many unwall'd towns and villages which they inhabited, besides country houses.

Upon the whole, it appears that effectual care was taken, that the Levites should live both comfortably and usefully; and those, whether ministers or others, for whom providence has done well, must look upon themselves as obliged thereby to do good, and, according as their capacity and opportunity is, to serve their generation.

43. ¶ And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers: and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. 44. And the LORD gave them rest round about according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. 45. There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel: all came to pass.

We have here the conclusion of this whole matter, the foregoing history summed up, and to make it appear the more bright, compared with the promise, of which it was the full accomplishment. God's word and his works mutually illustrate each other. The performance makes the promise appear very true, and the promise makes the performance appear very kind.

1. God had promised to give the seed of Abraham the land of Canaan for a possession, and now at last he performed that promise, ver. 43. they possessed it, and dwelt therein. Though they had often forfeited the benefit of that promise, and God had long delayed the performance of it, yet at last all difficulties were conquered, and Canaan was their own. And the promise of the heavenly Canaan is as sure to all God's spiritual Israel, for it is the promise of him that cannot lie.

2. God had promised to give them rest in that land, and now they had rest round about. Rest from the fatigues of their travel through the wilderness, which tedious march, perhaps, was long in their bones; rest from their wars in Canaan, and the inroads which their enemies there had at first made upon them. They now dwelt, not only in habitations of their own, but those quiet and peaceable ones; though there were Canaanites that remained, yet none that had either strength or spirit to attack them, or so much as to give them an alarm. This rest continued, till they by their own sin and folly put thorns into their own beds, their own eyes.

3. God had promised to give them victory and success in their wars, and this promise likewise was fulfilled, there stood not a man before them, ver. 44. They had the better in every battle, and which way soever they turned their forces, they prospered. It is true, there were Canaanites now remaining in many parts of the land, and such as afterwards made head against them, and became very formidable. But, (1.) As to the present remains of the Canaanites, they were no contradiction to the promise, for God had said he would not drive them out all at once, but by little and little, Exod. xxiii. 30. They had now as much in their full possession as they had occasion for, and as they had hands to manage; so that the Canaanites only kept possession of some of the less cultivated parts of the country against the beasts of the field, till Israel, in process of time, should become numerous enough to replenish them. (2.) As to the after-prevalency of the Canaanites, that was purely the effect of Israel's cowardice and slothfulness, and the punishment of their sinful inclination to the idolatries and other abominations of the heathen, which the Lord would have cast out before them, but that they harboured and indulged them.

So that the foundations of God stands sure; Israel's experience of God's fidelity is here upon record, and is an acquittance under their hands to the honour of God, the vindication of his promise which had been so often trusted, and the encouragement of all believers to the end of the world. There failed not any good thing, no, nor aught of any good thing (so it is full expressed) which the Lord hath spoken unto the house of Israel, but in due time all came to pass, ver. 45. Such an acknowledgment as this, here subscribed by Joshua, in the name of all Israel, we afterwards find made by Solomon; and all Israel did in effect say amen to it, 1 Kings viii. 56. The inviolable truth of God's promise, and the performance of it to the utmost, is what all the saints have been ready to bear their testimony to; and if in any thing it has seemed to come short, they have been as ready to own that they themselves must bear all the blame.

Many particular things we have read concerning the two tribes and a half, though nothing separated them from the rest of the tribes but only the river Jordan, and this chapter is wholly concerning them. (1.) Joshua's dismissal of the militia of those tribes from the camp of Israel, in which they had served as auxiliaries, during all the wars of Canaan, and their return thereupon to their own country, ver. 1—9. (2.) The altar they built on the borders of Jordan, in token of their communion with the land of Israel, ver. 10. (3.) The offence which the rest of the tribes took at this altar, and the message they sent them thereupon, ver. 11—20. (4.) The apology which the two tribes and a half made for what they had done, ver. 21—29. (5.) The satisfaction which their apology gave to the rest of the tribes, ver. 30—34. And (which is strange) whereas in most differences that happen there is a fault on both sides, on this there was fault on no side; none (for ought appears) were to be blamed, but all to be praised.

1. THEN Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. 2. And said unto them, Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you. 3. Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God. 4. And now the LORD your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them: therefore now return ye, and get ye unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side Jordan. 5. But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul. 6. So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away: and they went unto their tents. 7. ¶ Now to the one half of the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given possession in Bashan: but unto the other half thereof gave Joshua among their brethren on this side Jordan westward. And when Joshua sent them away also unto their tents, then he blessed them. 8. And he spake unto them, saying, Return with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raiment: divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren. 9. And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go unto the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, whereof they were possessed, according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

The war being ended, and ended gloriously, Joshua, as a prudent general, disbanded his army, who never designed to make war their trade, and sends them home to enjoy what they had conquered, and to beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; and, particularly, the forces of these separate tribes, who had received their inheritance on the other side Jordan from Moses, upon this condition, that their men of war should assist the other tribes in the conquest of Canaan, which they promised to do, Numb. xxxii. 32. and renewed the promise to Joshua at the opening of the campaign, Josh. i. 16. And now they had performed their bargain, Joshua quickly and solemnly in Shiloh gives them their discharge. Whether this was done as it was placed, not till after the land was divided, as some think, or whether after the war was ended, and before the division was made, as others think, because there was no need of their assistance in dividing the land, but only in conquering of it; nor were there any of their tribes employed as commissioners in the affair, but only of the other ten, Numb. xxxiv. 18, &c. this is certain, it was not done till after Shiloh was made the head quarters, ver. 8. and the land was begun to be divided before they removed from Gilgal, chap. xiv. 6.

It is probable this army of Reubenites and Gadites, which had led the van in all the wars of Canaan, had sometimes in the intervals of action, and when the rest of the army retired into winter-quarters, some of them at least made a step over Jordan, for it was not far, to visit their families, and to look after their private affairs, and perhaps tarried at home, and sent others in their room more serviceable; but still these two tribes and a half had their quota of troops ready, forty thousand in all, which, whenever there was occasion, rendered themselves at their respective posts, and now attended in a body to receive their discharge. Though their affection to their families, and concern for their affairs, could not but make them, after so long absence, very desirous to return, yet, like good soldiers, they would not move till they had orders from their general. So though our heavenly Father's house above be never so desirable, (it is Bishop Hall's allusion) yet must we stay on earth till our warfare be accomplished, wait for a due discharge, and not anticipate the time of our removal.

1. Joshua dismisseth them to the land of their possession, ver. 4. They that were first in the assignment of their lot, were last in the enjoyment of it; they got the start of their brethren in title, but their brethren were before them in full possession; so the last shall be first, and the first last, that there may be something of equality.

2. He dismisseth them with their pay, for who goes a warfare at his own charge? ver. 8. Return with much riches unto your tents. Though all the land they had helped to conquer was to go to the other tribes, yet they should

should have their share of the plunder, and had so, and that was all the pay that any of the soldiers expected; for the wars of Canaan bore their own charges. Go, faith Joshua, go home to your tents, *i. e.* your houses, which he calls tents, because they had been so much used to tents in the wilderness, and indeed the strongest, sturdiest houses in this world are to be looked upon but as tents, mean and moveable in comparison with our house above. Go home with much riches, not only cattle, the spoil of the country, but silver and gold, the plunder of the cities, and, (1.) Let your brethren you leave behind have your good word, who have allowed you your share in full, though the land is intirely theirs, and have not offered to make any drawback. Do not say that you are losers by us. (2.) Let your brethren you go to, who abode by the siff, have some share of the spoil. *Divide the spoil with your brethren*, as that was divided which was taken in the war with Midian, *Numb. xxxi. 27.* Let your brethren that have wanted you all this while be the better for you when you come home.

3. He dismisseth them with a very honourable character. Though their service was a due debt, and the performance of a promise, and they had done no more than was their duty to do, yet he highly commends them; not only gives them up their bonds, as it were, now they had fulfilled the condition, but applauds their good services. Though it was by the favour of God and his power that Israel got possession of this land, and he must have all the glory, yet Joshua thought there was a thankful acknowledgment due to their brethren who assisted them, and whose sword and bow were employed for them. God must be chiefly eyed in our praises, yet instruments must not be altogether overlooked. He here commends them, (1.) For the readiness of their obedience to their commanders, *ver. 2.* When Moses was gone they remembered and observed the charge he had given them; and all the orders which Joshua, as general of the forces, had issued out, they had carefully obeyed, went, and came, and did as he appointed, *Math. viii. 9.* It is as much as any thing the soldier's praise, to observe the word of command. (2.) For the constancy of their affection, and adherence to their brethren, *you have not left them these many days.* How many days he doth not say, nor can we gather it for certain from any other place. Calvisius and others of the best chronologers compute, that the conquering and dividing of the land was the work of about six or seven years, and so long these separate tribes attended their camp, and did them the best service they could. Note, It will be the honour of those that have espoused the cause of God's Israel, and twined interests with them, to stick to them, and never to leave them till God has given them rest, and then they shall rest with them. (3.) For the faithfulness of their obedience to the divine law. They had not only done their duty to Joshua and Israel, but, which was best of all, they had made conscience of their duty to God: *ye have kept the charge*; or, as the word is, *ye have kept the keeping*, *i. e.* ye have carefully and circumspcctly kept the commandment of the Lord your God; not only in this particular instance of continuing in the service of Israel to the end of the war, but, in general, you have kept up religion in your part of the camp, a rare and excellent thing among soldiers, and where it is worthy to be praised.

4. He dismisseth them with good counsel, not to cultivate their ground, fortify their cities, and now their hands were inured to war and victory to invade their neighbours, and so enlarge their own territories, but to keep up serious godliness among them in the power of it. They were not politic but pious instructions that he gave them, *ver. 5.* in general, to take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law. They that have the commandment have it in vain, unless they do the commandment; and it will not be done aright, so apt are we to turn aside, and so industrious are our spiritual enemies to turn us aside, unless we take heed, diligent heed. In particular, to love the Lord our God, as the best of beings, and the best of friends, and as far as that principle rules in the heart, and is the spring of its pulses, there will be a constant care and sincere endeavour to walk in his ways, in all his ways, even those that are narrow and up hill, in every particular instance, and in all manner of conversation to keep his commandments; and at all times, and in all conditions, with purpose of heart to cleave unto him, and to serve him and his honour, and the interest of his kingdom among men, with all our heart, and with all our soul. What good counsel was here given to them, is given to us all; God give us grace to take it!

5. He dismisseth them with a blessing, *ver. 6.* particularly the half-tribe of Manasseh, to which Joshua, as an Ephraimite, was somewhat nearer akin than to the other two, and who, perhaps, were the more loth to depart, because they left one half of their own tribe behind them, and therefore bidding often farewell, and lingering behind, had a second dismissal and blessing, *ver. 7.* Joshua not only prayed for them as a friend, but blessed them as a father in the name of the Lord, recommending them, their families and affairs to the grace of God. Some, by the blessing Joshua gave them, understand the presents he made them, in recompence of their services; but Joshua being a prophet, and having given them one part of a prophet's reward, in the instructions he gave them, *ver. 5.* no doubt we must understand this of the other, even the prayers he made for them, as one having authority, and as God's vicegerent.

Being thus dismissed, they returned to the land of their possession in a body, *ver. 9.* ferry-boats being, it is likely, provided for their repassing Jordan. Though masters of families may have occasion to be absent, long absent from their families sometimes; yet when their business abroad is finished, they must remember home is their place, from which they ought not to wander as a bird from her nest.

10. ¶ And when they came unto the borders of Jordan, that are in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see to.

11. ¶ And the children of Israel heard say, Behold, the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, have built an altar over-against the land of Canaan, in the borders of Jordan, at the passage of the children of Israel. 12. And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them, 13. And the children of Israel sent unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Elcazar the priest, 14. And with him ten princes, of each chief house a prince, throughout all the tribes of Israel, and each one was an head of the house of their fathers among the thousands of Israel. 15. And they came unto the children of Reuben, and to the children

of Gad, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, unto the land of Gilead, and they spake with them, saying, 16. Thus saith the whole congregation of the LORD, What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that ye have built you an altar, that ye might rebel this day against the LORD? 17. Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, (although there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD,) 18. But that ye must turn away this day from following the LORD? and it will be, seeing ye rebel to day against the LORD, that to-morrow he will be wroth with the whole congregation of Israel. 19. Notwithstanding, if the land of your possession be unclean, then pass ye over unto the land of the possession of the LORD, wherein the LORD's tabernacle dwelleth, and take possession among us: but rebel not against the LORD, nor rebel against us, in building you an altar, beside the altar of the LORD our God. 20. Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? and that man perished not alone in his iniquity.

Here is, 1. The pious care of the separated tribes to keep their hold of Canaan's religion, then when they were leaving Canaan's land, that they might not be as the *sons of the stranger*, utterly separated from God's people, *Isa. lvi. 3.* In order to this they built a great altar on the borders of Jordan, to be a witness for them that they were Israelites, and as such partakers of the altars of the Lord, *1 Cor. x. 18.* When they came to Jordan, *ver. 10.* they did not consult how to preserve the remembrance of their own exploits in the wars of Canaan, and the services they had done their brethren, by erecting a monument to the immortal honour of the two tribes and a half: but their relation to the church of God, and their interest in the communion of saints, is that which they are solicitous to preserve, and perpetuate the proofs and evidences of; and therefore, without delay, when the thing was first proposed by some among them, who, though glad to think that they were going towards home, were sorry to think that they were going from towards the altar of God, immediately they erected this altar, which served as a badge to keep up their fellowship with the other tribes in the things of God. Some think they built this altar on the Canaan side of Jordan, in the lot of Benjamin, that looking over the river they might see the figure of the altar at Shiloh, when they could not conveniently go to it; but it is more likely that they built it on their own side of the water, for what had they to do to build on another man's land without his consent? And is it said to be over-against the land of Canaan; nor would there have been any cause of suspecting it designed for sacrifice, if they had not built it among themselves.

This altar was very innocently and honestly designed, but it had been well, if since it had in it an appearance of evil, and might be an occasion of offence to their brethren, they had consulted the oracle of God about it before they did it; or at least acquainted their brethren with their purpose, and given them the same explication of their altar before to prevent their jealousy, which they did after to remove it. Their zeal was commendable, but it ought to have been guided with discretion; there was no haste of building an altar for the purpose they intended this, but they might have taken time to consider and take advice; yet when their sincerity was made to appear, we do not find that they were blamed for their rashness; God doth, and men should overlook the weakness of an honest zeal.

2. The holy jealousy of the other tribes for the honour of God and his altar at Shiloh. Notice was presently brought to the princes of Israel of the setting up of this altar, *ver. 11.* And they knowing how strict and severe that law was, which required them to offer all their sacrifices in the place which God should choose, and not elsewhere, *Deut. xii. 5-7.* were soon apprehensive, that the setting up of another altar, was an affront to the choice God had lately made of a place to put his name in, and had a direct tendency to the worship of some other God.

Now, 1. Their suspicion was very excusable, for it must be confessed, the thing *prima facie* looked ill, and gave umbrage of a design to set up and maintain a competitor with the altar at Shiloh. It was no strained *innuendo*, from the building an altar, to infer an intention to offer sacrifice upon it, and that might introduce idolatry, and might end in a total apostasy from the faith and worship of the God of Israel. So great a matter might this fire kindle. God is jealous for his own institutions, and therefore we should be so too, and afraid of every thing that looks like, or leads to idolatry.

2. Their zeal upon this suspicion was very commendable, *ver. 12.* When they apprehended that these tribes, which by the river Jordan were separated from them, were separating themselves from God, they took it as the greatest injury that could be done to themselves, and shewed themselves in a readiness, if it were necessary, to put their lives in their hands, in defence of the altar of God, and to take up arms for the chastising and reducing these rebels, and to prevent the spreading of the infection, if no gentler methods would serve, by cutting off from their body the gangrened member. They all gathered together, and Shiloh was the place of their rendezvous, because it was in defence of the divine charter lately granted to that place that they now appeared; their resolution was as became a kingdom of priests, who being devoted to God and his service, did not acknowledge their brethren, nor know their own children, *Deut. xxxiii. 9.* That they would immediately go up to war against them, if it appeared they were revolted from God, and in rebellion against him; though they were bone of their bone, had been companions with them in tribulation in the wilderness, and serviceable to them in the wars of Canaan; yet if they turn to serve other gods they will treat them as enemies, not as sons of Israel but as children of whoredoms, for so God had appointed, *Deut. xiii. 12.* They had but newly sheathed their swords, and retired from the perils and fatigues of war to the rest God had given them, and yet they are willing to begin a new war, rather than be any way wanting in their duty to restrain, repress, and revenge idolatry, and every step towards it. A brave resolution, and which shews them hearty for their religion, and, we hope, careful and diligent in the practice of it themselves. Corruptions in religion are best dealt with at first, before they get a head and plead prescription.

2. Their prudence in prosecution of this zealous resolution is no less commendable. God had appointed them, in cases of this nature, to inquire and make search, *Deut. xiii. 14.* that they might not wrong their brethren

threw under pretence of righting their religion: accordingly they resolve here not to send forth their armies to wage war till they had first sent their ambassadors to inquire into the merits of the cause, and these men of the first rank, one out of each tribe, and Phineas at the head of them to be their spokesman, *ver. 13, 14.* Thus was their zeal for God tempered, guided, and governed with *meekness of wisdom.* He that knows all things, and hates all ill things, would not punish the worst of criminals, but he would first go down and see, *Gen. xviii. 21.* Many an unhappy strife would be prevented, or soon taken up, by an impartial and favourable inquiry into that which is the matter of offence. The rectifying of mistakes and misunderstandings, and the setting of misconstrued words and actions in a true light, would be the most effectual way to accommodate both public and private quarrels, and bring them to a happy period.

4. The ambassadors management of this matter came fully up to the sense and spirit of the congregation concerning it, and speaks much both of zeal and prudence.

1. The charge they draw against their brethren is indeed very high, and admits no other excuse, but that it was in their zeal for the honour of God, and was now intended to justify the resentments of the congregation at Shiloh, and to awaken the supposed delinquents to clear themselves, otherwise they might have suspended their judgments, or mollified it at least, and not have taken it for granted, as they do here, *ver. 16.* that the building of this altar was a *trespass against the God of Israel*, and a trespass no less heinous than the revolt of soldiers from their captain, (*you turn from following the Lord*) and the rebellion of subjects against their sovereign (*that ye might rebel this day against the Lord.*) Hard words, it was well they were not able to make good their charge. Let not innocence think it strange to be thus misrepresented and accused, *They laid to my charge things that I knew not.*

2. The aggravation of the crime charged upon their brethren is somewhat *far fetched*, *ver. 17.* Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us? Probably that is mentioned, because Phineas, the first commissioner in this treaty, had signalized himself in that matter, *Numb. xxv. 7.* and because we may suppose they were now about the very place in which that iniquity was committed on the other side Jordan. It is good to recollect and improve those instances of the wrath of God, revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, which have fallen out in our own time, and which we ourselves have been eye-witnesses of. He minds them of the iniquity of Peor, (1.) As a very great sin, and very provoking to God. The building of this altar seemed but a small matter, but it might lead to an iniquity as bad as that of Peor, and therefore must be crushed in its first rise. Note, The remembrance of great sins committed formerly, should engage us to stand upon our guard against the least occasions and beginnings of sin: for the way of sin is down-hill. (2.) As a sin that the whole congregation had smarted for; *there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord*, of which in one day there died no less than twenty-four thousand; was not that enough to warn you for ever against idolatry? What will you bring upon yourselves another plague? Are you so mad upon an idolatrous altar, that you will run yourself thus upon the sword's point of God's judgments? Doth not our camp still feel from that sin, and the punishment of it? *We are not cleansed from it unto this day*; there are remaining sparks, (1.) Of the infection of that sin, some among us so inclined to idolatry, that if you set up another altar, they will soon take occasion from that, whether you intend it or no, to worship another God. (2.) Of the wrath of God against them for that sin; we have reason to fear that if we provoke God by another sin to visit, he will remember against us the iniquity of Peor, as he threatened to do that of the golden calf, *Exod. xxxii. 34.* And dare you wake the sleeping lion of divine vengeance? Note, It is a foolish and dangerous thing for people to think their former sins little, *too little for them*, as those who do add sin to sin, and so *treasure up wrath against the day of wrath.* Let therefore the time pass *judiciously*, *1 Pet. iv. 3.*

3. The reason they give for their concerning themselves so warmly in this matter is very sufficient; they were obliged to it in their own necessary defence by the law of self-preservation, for if you revolt from God to-day, who knows but to-morrow his judgments may break in upon the whole congregation, *ver. 18.* as in the case of Achan, *ver. 20.* He sinned, and we all smarted for it; by which we should receive instruction, and from what God did then, infer what he may do, and fear what he will do, if we do not witness against your sin, who are so many, and punish it. Note, The confederates of the public peace are obliged, in justice to the common safety, to use their power for the restraining and suppressing of vice and profaneness, lest, if it be connived at, the sin thereby become national, and bring God's judgments upon the community. Nay, we are all concerned therefore to reprove our neighbour when he doth amiss, *lest we bear sin for him*, *Lev. xix. 17.*

4. The offer they make is very fair and kind, *ver. 19.* that if they thought the land of their possession unclean for want of an altar, and therefore could not be easy without one, rather than they should set up another in competition with that at Shiloh, they should be welcome to come back to the land where the Lord's tabernacle was, and settle there, and they would very willingly straiten themselves to make room for them. By this they shewed a sincere and truly pious zeal against schism, that rather than their brethren should have any occasion to set up a separate altar, though their pretence for it, as here supposed, was very weak, and grounded upon a great mistake, yet they were willing to part with a considerable share of the land which God himself had by the lot assigned them, to comprehend them and take them in among them. This was the spirit of Israelites indeed.

21. ¶ Then the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, answered, and said unto the heads of the thousands of Israel: 22. The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know, if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the LORD (save us not this day.) 23. That we have built us an altar to turn from following the LORD, or if to offer thereon burnt-offering, or meat-offering, or if to offer peace-offerings thereon, let the LORD himself require it; 24. And if we have not rather done it for fear of this thing, saying, In time to come your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have you to do with the LORD God of Israel? 25. For the LORD hath made Jordan a border between us and you: ye children of Reuben, and children of Gad, ye have no part in the LORD: so shall your children make our chil-

dren cease from fearing the LORD. 26. Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt-offering, nor for sacrifice: 27. But that it may be a witness between us and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the LORD before him with our burnt-offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace-offerings, that your children may not say to our children in time to come, Ye have no part in the LORD. 28. Therefore said we, that it shall be, when they should say to us, or to our generations in time to come, that we may say again, Behold the pattern of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt-offerings, nor for sacrifices, but it is a witness between us and you. 29. God forbid that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn this day from following the LORD, to build an altar for burnt-offerings, for meat-offerings, or for sacrifices, besides the altar of the LORD our God that is before his tabernacle.

We may suppose there was a general convention called of the princes and great men of the separate tribes, to give audience to those ambassadors; or, perhaps, the army as it came home were still encamped together in a body, and not yet dispersed; however it was, there were enough to represent the two tribes and a half, and to give their sense.

Their reply to the warm remonstrance of the ten tribes is very fair and ingenious. They do not retort their charge, upbraid them with the injustice and unkindness of their threatenings, or reproach them for their rash and hasty censures, but give them that soft answer which turns away wrath, avoiding all those grievous words which stir up anger; they demur not to their jurisdiction, nor plead that they were not accountable to them for what they had done, nor bid them mind their own business; but, by a free and open declaration of their sincere intention in what they did, free themselves from the imputation they were under, and set themselves right in the opinion of their brethren; to do which they only needed to state the case, and put the matter in a true light.

1. They solemnly protest against any design to use this altar for sacrifice or offering, and therefore were far from setting it up in competition with the altar at Shiloh, or from entertaining the least thought of deserting that. They had indeed set up that which had the shape and fashion of an altar, but they had not dedicated it to a religious use, had had no solemnity of its consecration, and therefore ought not to be charged with a design to put it to any such use. To gain credit to this protestation, here is,

(1.) A solemn appeal to God concerning it, with which they began their defence, intending thereby to give glory to God first, and then to give satisfaction to their brethren, *ver. 22.*

(1.) A mighty awe and reverence of God which they express in the form of their appeal; *The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, he knows.* Or, as it might be read somewhat closer to the original, *The God of gods, Jehovah, the God of gods, Jehovah, he knows,* which speaks his self-existence, and self-sufficiency, he is Jehovah, and has sovereignty and supremacy over all beings and powers whatsoever, even those that are called gods, or that are worshipped. This brief confession of their faith would help to obviate and remove their brethren's suspicion of them, as if they intended to desert the God of Israel, and worship other gods; how could they entertain such a thought, who believed him to be God over all. Let us learn hence always to speak of God with reverence and seriousness, and to mention his name with a solemn pause. Those who make their appeals to heaven with a slight careless God knows, have reason to fear lest they take his name in vain, for it is very unlike this here.

(2.) It is a great confidence of their own integrity which they express in the matter of their appeal. They refer the controversy to the God of gods, whose judgment we are sure is according to truth, such as the guilty have reason to dread, and the upright to rejoice in. If it be in rebellion or transgression that we have built this altar, to confront the altar of the Lord at Shiloh, to make a party, or to set up any new gods or worship; 1. *He knows it*, *ver. 22.* for he is perfectly acquainted with the thoughts and intents of the heart, and particularly with all inclinations to idolatry, *Psal. xlv. 20, 21.* that is in a particular manner before him, we believe he knows it, and we cannot by any arts conceal it from him. 2. *Let him require it*, as we know he will, for he is a jealous God. Nothing but a clear conscience would have thus imprecated divine justice to avenge the rebellion, if there had been any. Note, 1. In every thing we do in religion, it highly concerns us to approve ourselves to God in our integrity therein, remembering that he knows the heart. 2. When we fall under the censures of men, it is very comfortable to be able with a humble confidence to appeal to God concerning our sincerity. See *1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.*

(2.) A sober apology presented to their brethren. *Israel he shall know.* Though the record on high, and the witness in our bosoms, are principally to be made sure for us, yet there is a satisfaction besides, which we owe to our brethren, who doubt concerning our integrity, and which we should be ready to give with meekness and fear. If our sincerity be known to God, we should study likewise to let others know it by its fruits, especially those, who though they mistake us, yet shew a zeal for the glory of God, as the ten tribes here did.

(3.) A serious adjuration or renunciation of the design which they were suspected to be guilty of. With this they conclude their defence, *ver. 29.* God forbid that we should rebel against the Lord, as we own we should if we had set up this altar for burnt-offerings; no, we abhor the thought of it. We have as great a value and veneration for the altar of the Lord at Shiloh, as any of the tribes of Israel have, and are as firmly resolved to adhere to it, and constantly to attend it; we have the same concern that you have for the purity of God's worship, and the unity of his Church; far be it, far be it from us to think of turning away from following God.

2. They fully explain their true intent and meaning in building this altar: and we have all the reason in the world to believe that it is a true representation of their design, and not advanced now to palliate it afterwards; as we have reason to think that the same persons meant very honestly, when they petitioned to have their lot on that side Jordan, though then also it was their unhappiness to be misunderstood even by Moses himself.

In their vindication they make it out, that the building of this altar was so far from being a step towards a separation from their brethren, and from the altar of the Lord at Shiloh, that, on the contrary, it was really designed for a pledge and preservative of their communion with their brethren, and

and with the altar of God; and a token of their resolution to *do the service of the Lord before him*, ver. 27. and to continue to do so.

1. They give an account of the fears they had, lest in process of time their posterity, being seated at such a distance from the tabernacle, should be looked upon and treated as strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, ver. 24. It was for fear of this thing, and the word signifies a great perplexity and solicitude of mind which they were in, until they eased themselves by this expedient. As they were returning home, (and we may suppose it was not thought of before, else they would have made Joshua acquainted with their purpose) some of them in discourse started this matter, and the rest took the hint, and represented to themselves and one another, a very melancholy prospect of what might probably happen in after-ages, that their children would be looked upon by the other tribes as having no interest in the altar of God, and the sacrifices there offered. Now indeed they were owned as brethren, and were as welcome at the tabernacle as any other of the tribes, but what if their children after them should be disowned? They, by reason of their distance, and the interposal of Jordan, which it was not easy at all times to pass and repass, could not be so numerous and constant in their attendance on the three yearly feasts as the other tribes, to make a continual claim to the privileges of Israelites, and would therefore be looked upon as inconsiderable members of the Church, and by degrees would be rejected as not members of it at all, *so shall your children* (who in their pride will be apt to monopolize the privileges of the altar) *make our children* (who perhaps will not be so careful as they ought to be to keep hold of those privileges) *cease from fearing the Lord*. Note, 1. They that are cut off from public ordinances are likely to lose all religion, and will by degrees cease from fearing the Lord. Though the form and profession of godliness is kept up by many without the life and power of it, yet the life and power of it will not be long kept up without the form and profession of it. You take away grace, if you take away the means of grace. 2. They who have themselves found the comfort and benefit of God's ordinances, cannot but desire to preserve and perpetuate the entail of them upon their seed, and use all possible precautions that their children after them may not be *made to cease from following the Lord*, or be looked upon as having no part in him.

2. The project they had to prevent this, ver. 26, 27, 28. Therefore to secure an interest in the altar of God to those who shall come after us, and to prove their title to it, *we said, let us build an altar, to be a witness between us and you*. That having this copy of the altar in their custody, it might be produced as an evidence of their rights to the privileges of the original. Every one that saw this altar, and observed it was never used for sacrifice and offering, would enquire what was the meaning of it, and this answer would be given to that enquiry, that it was built by those separate tribes, in token of their communion with their brethren, and their joint-interest with them in the altar of the Lord. Christ is the great altar that sanctifies every gift; the best evidence of our interest in him will be the pattern of his Spirit in our hearts, and our conformity to him; if we can produce that it will be a testimony for us, that we have *a part in the Lord*, and an earnest of our perseverance in following him.

30. ¶ And when Phinehas the priest, and the princes of the congregation, and heads of the thousands of Israel, which were with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh spake, it pleased them. 31. And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, said unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the children of Manasseh, This day we perceive that the LORD is among us, because ye have not committed this trespass against the LORD: now ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the LORD. 32. ¶ And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the princes, returned from the children of Reuben, and from the children of Gad, out of the land of Gilead, unto the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought them word again. 33. And the thing pleased the children of Israel, and the children of Israel blessed God, and did not intend to go up against them in battle, to destroy the land wherein the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt. 34. And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, called the altar *Ed*: for it *shall be* a witness between us, that the LORD is God.

We have here the good issue of this controversy, which if there had not been on both sides a disposition to peace, as there was on both sides a zeal for God, might have been of ill consequence; for quarrels about religion, for want of wisdom and love, often prove the most fierce and most difficult to be made up. But these contending parties, when the matter was fairly stated and argued, were so happy as to understand one another very well, and so the difference was presently compromised.

1. The ambassadors were wonderfully pleased, when the separate tribes had given in a protestation of the innocency of their intentions in building this altar. (1.) The ambassadors did not call in question their sincerity in that protestation, did not say, you tell us you design it not for sacrifice and offering, but who can believe you? What security will you give us that it shall never be so used? No, *Charity believeth all things, hopeth all things*, believes and hopes the best, and is very loth to give the lie to any. (2.) They did not upbraid them with the rashness and unadvisedness of this action. Did not tell them, if you would do such a thing, and with this good intention, yet you might have had that respect for Joshua and Eleazar, as to have advised with them, or at least have made them acquainted with it, and so have saved the trouble and expence of this embassy. But a little want of consideration and good manners should be excused and overlooked in those who, we have reason to think, mean honestly. (3.) Much less did they go about to fish for evidence to make out their charge, because they had once exhibited it, but were glad to have their mistake rectified, and were not at all ashamed to own it. Proud and peevish spirits, when they have passed an unjust censure upon their brethren, though never so much convincing evidence be brought of the injustice of it, they will stand to it, and can by no means be persuaded to retract it. These ambassadors were not so prejudiced; their brethren's vindication pleased them, ver. 30. They looked upon their innocency as a token of God's presence, ver. 31. especially when they found that what was done, was so far from being an

indication of their growing cool to the altar of God, that, on the contrary, it was a fruit of their zealous affection to it; *you have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the Lord*; i. e. you have not, as we feared, delivered them into the hand of the Lord, or exposed them to his judgments by the trespass we were jealous of.

2. The congregation was abundantly satisfied, when their ambassadors reported to them their brethren's apology for what they had done. It should seem they stayed together, at least by their representatives, until they heard the issue, ver. 32. And when they understood the truth of the matter, it pleased them, ver. 33. and they *blessed God*. Note, Our brethren's constancy in religion, their zeal for the power of godliness, and their keeping the *unity of the Spirit* in faith and love, notwithstanding the jealousies conceived of them as breaking the *unity of the Church*, is that which we should be very glad to be satisfied of, and should make the matter both of our rejoicing and of our thanksgiving; let God have the glory of it, and let us take the comfort of it. Being thus satisfied, they laid down their arms immediately, and were so far from any thoughts of prosecuting the war they had been meditating against their brethren, that we may suppose them wishing for the next feast, when they should meet them at Shiloh.

3. The separate tribes were gratified, and since they had a mind to preserve among them this pattern of the altar of God, though there was not likely to be that occasion for it which they fancied, yet Joshua and the princes let them have their humour, and did not give orders for the demolishing of it; though there was as much reason to fear that it might in process of time be an occasion of idolatry, as there was to hope that ever it might be a preservation from idolatry. Thus did the *strong bear the infirmities of the weak*. Only, care was taken that they having explained the meaning of their altar, that it was intended for no more but a testimony of their communion with the altar at Shiloh, this explanation should be recorded, which was done according to the usage of those times, by giving a name to it, signifying so much, ver. 34. they called it *Ed*, a witness, to that and no more. A witness of the relation they stood in to God and Israel, and of their concurrence with the rest of the tribes in the same common faith, that *Jehovah he is God*; he and no other. It was a witness to posterity of their care to transmit their religion pure and intire to them, and would be a witness against them, if ever they should forsake God, and turn from following after him.

C H A P. XXIII.

In this and the following chapter we have two farewell sermons, which Joshua preached to the people of Israel a little before his death. Had he designed to gratify the curiosity of succeeding ages, he would rather have recorded the method of Israel's settlement in their new conquests, their husbandry, manufactures, trade, customs, courts of justice, and the constitutions of their infant commonwealth, which one would wish to be informed of; but that which he intended in the registers of this book, was to entail on posterity a sense of religion and their duty to God; and therefore overlooking those things, which are the usual subjects of a common history, he here transmits to his reader the methods he took to persuade Israel to be faithful to their covenant with their God, which might have a good influence on the generations to come who should read those reasonings, as we may hope they had on that generation which then heard them. In this chapter we have, 1. A convention of the state called, ver. 1, 2. probably to consult about the common concerns of their land, and to set in order that which, after some years trial, being left to their prudence, was found wanting. 2. Joshua's speech to them at the opening, or perhaps at the concluding of the sessions, to hear which was the principal design of their coming together. In it, 1. Joshua minds them of what God had done for them, ver. 3, 4, 9, 14. and what he was ready to do yet farther, ver. 5—10. 2. He exhorts them carefully and resolutely to persevere in their duty to God, ver. 6, 8, 11. 3. He cautions them against all familiarity with their idolatrous inmates, ver. 7. 4. He gives them fair warning of the fatal consequences of it, if they should revolt from God and turn to idols, ver. 12, 13, 15, 16. In all which he shewed himself zealous for his God, and jealous over Israel with a godly jealousy.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, a long time after that the LORD had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed old, and stricken in age. 2. And Joshua called for all Israel; and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old, and stricken in age: 3. And ye have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto all these nations, because of you; for the LORD your God is he that hath fought for you. 4. Behold, I have divided unto you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea westward. 5. And the LORD your God, he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight, and ye shall possess their land, as the LORD your God hath promised unto you. 6. Be ye therefore very courageous, to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom, to the right hand, or to the left. 7. That ye come not among these nations, these that remain amongst you, neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them: 8. But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day. 9. For the LORD hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day. 10. One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD

your God, he *it is* that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.

As to the date of this edict of Joshua's;

1. No mention at all is made of the place where this general assembly was held; some think it was at Timnah-herah, Joshua's own city, where he lived, and whence, being old, he could not well remove: but it doth not appear that he took so much state upon him, therefore it is more probable this meeting was at Shiloh, where the tabernacle of meeting was, and to which place, perhaps, all the males that could, were now come up to worship before the Lord, at one of the three great feasts, which Joshua took the opportunity of for the delivering of this charge to them.

2. There is only a general mention of the time when this was done. It was *long after the Lord had given them rest*, but it is not said how long, *ver. 1.* It was, (1.) So long as that Israel had time to feel the comforts of their rest and possessions in Canaan, and to enjoy the advantages of that good land. (2.) So long as that Joshua had time to observe which way their danger lay of being corrupted, *viz.* by their intimacy with the Canaanites that remained, against which he is therefore careful to arm them.

3. The persons to whom Joshua made his speech, to all Israel, even their elders, &c. So it might be read, *ver. 2.* they could not all come within hearing, but he called for all the elders, *i. e.* the privy-counsellors, which in latter times constituted the great Sanhedrim, the heads of the tribes, *i. e.* the noblemen and gentlemen of their respective countries, the judges learned in the laws, that tried criminals and causes and gave judgment upon them; and, lastly, the officers and sheriffs, who were intrusted with the execution of those judgments: These Joshua called together, and to them he addressed himself, (1.) That they might communicate what he said, or at least the sense and substance of it, to those under them in their respective countries, and so this charge might be dispersed through the whole nation. (2.) Because if they would be prevailed with to serve God and cleave to him, they by their influence on the common people would keep them right. If great men be good men, they will help to make many good.

4. Joshua's circumstances when he gave them this charge, he *was old and stricken in age*, *ver. 2.* probably, it was in the last year of his life, and he lived to be one hundred and ten years old, *chap. xxiv. 29.* And he himself takes notice of it, in the first words of his discourse, *ver. 2.* when he began to be old, some years ago God minded him of it, *chap. xiii. 1. thou art old.* But now he did himself feel so much of the decays of age that he needed not to be told of it, he readily speaks of it himself, *I am old and stricken in age.* He useth it, (1.) As an argument with himself to give them this charge, because being old he could expect to be but a little while with them to advise and instruct them; and therefore (as St. Peter speaks, *2 Pet. i. 13.*) *as long as he is in this tabernacle* he will take all opportunities to put them in remembrance of their duty, knowing by the increasing infirmities of age, that he must shortly put off this tabernacle, and desiring that after his decease they might continue as good as they were now. When we see death hastening towards us, that should quicken us to do the *work of life* with all our might. (2.) As an argument with them to give heed to what he said. He was old and experienced, and therefore to be the more regarded, for days should speak; he was grown old in their service, and had spent himself for their good, and therefore was to be the more regarded by them. He was old and dying, they would not have him long to preach to them, therefore let them observe what he said now, and lay it up in store for the time to come.

5. The discourse itself, the scope of which is to engage them, if possible, them and their seed after them, to preserve in the true faith and worship of the God of Israel.

1. He puts them in mind of the great things God had done for them, now in his days, and under his administration, for here he goes no farther back. And for the proof of this he appeals to their own eyes, *ver. 3.* *Ye have seen all that the Lord your God has done;* not what I have done, or what you have done, we were only instruments in God's hand, but what God himself has done by me, and for you. (1.) Many great and mighty nations (as the rate of nations then went) were driven out from as fine a country as any was at that time upon the face of the earth, to make room for Israel; you see *what he has done to these nations*, who were his creatures, the work of his hands, and whom he could have made new creatures, and fit for his service, yet see what destruction he has made of them because of you, *ver. 3.* how he has driven them out from before you, *ver. 9.* as if they were of no account with him, though great and strong in comparison with you. (2.) They were not only driven out, that they might have been, and yet sent to some other country lest rich to begin a new plantation there, suppose to that wilderness in which Israel had wandered so long, and so they had only exchanged seats with them; but they were trodden down before them, though they held out against them with the greatest obstinacy that could be, yet they were subdued before them: which made the possession of their land so much the more glorious an instance of the power and goodness of the God of Israel, *ver. 5.* *The Lord your God has not only led you, and fed you, and kept you, but he has fought for you as a man of war, by which title he was known among them when he first brought them out of Egypt, Exod. xv. 3.* So clear and cheap were all their victories during the course of this long war, that *no man had been able to stand before them*, *ver. 9. i. e.* to make head against them, so as neither to put them in fear, create them any difficulty, or give any check to the progress of their victorious arms. In every battle they carried the day, in every siege they carried the city; their loss before Ai upon a particular occasion, was inconsiderable, and only served to shew them on what terms they stood with God, but otherwise, never was army crowned with such a constant uninterrupted series of successes, as the armies of Israel were in the wars of Canaan. (3.) They had not only conquered the Canaanites, but were put in full possession of their land, *ver. 4.* *I have divided to you by lot these nations*, both those which are cut off, and those which remain, not only that you may spoil and plunder them, and live at discretion in them for a time, but to be a sure and lasting inheritance for your tribes. You have it not only under your feet, but in your hands.

2. He assures them of God's readiness to carry on, and complete this glorious work in due time. It is true, some of the Canaanites did yet remain, and in some places were strong and daring, but that would be no balk to their expectations; when Israel was so multiplied as to be able to replenish this land, God would expel the Canaanites to the last man, provided Israel would pursue their advantages, and carry on the war against them with vigour, *ver. 5.* *The Lord your God shall drive them out of your sight*, so that there shall not be a Canaanite to be seen in the land, and even that part of the country which is yet in their hands, ye shall possess. If it were objected, that now the men of war of the several tribes were dispersed to their respective countries, and the army disbanded, it would be difficult to get them together when there was occasion to renew the war upon the remainder of the Canaanites; in answer to that, he tells them what little need they had to be in care about the numbers of their forces, *ver. 10.* *One man of you shall chase a thousand*, as Jonathan did,

1 Sam. xiv. 13. Each tribe may venture for itself, and for the recovery of its lot, without fearing disadvantage by the disproportion of numbers; for the Lord your God, whose all power is, both to inspirit and dispirit, and who has all the creatures at his beck, *he it is that fighteth for you*, and how many do you reckon him for?

3. He hereupon most earnestly chargeth them to adhere to their duty, to go on and persevere in the good ways of the Lord wherein they were so well set out. He exhorts them,

1. To be very courageous, *ver. 6.* God fighteth for you against your enemies, do you therefore *behave yourselves valiantly* for him. Keep and do with firm resolution *all that is written in the book of the law.* He presseth upon them no more than what they were already bound to. Keep with care, do with diligence, and eye what is written with sincerity.

2. To be very cautious. Take heed of mistaking it, either on the right-hand or on the left, for there are errors and extremes on both hands. Take heed of running either into a profane neglect of any of God's institutions, or into a superstitious addition of any of your own inventions. They must especially take heed of all approaches towards idolatry, the sin to which they were first inclined, and would be most tempted, *ver. 7.* (1.) They must not acquaint themselves with idolaters, not come among them to visit them, or be present at any of their feasts or entertainments; for they could not contract any intimacy, or keep up any conversation with them, without danger of infection. (2.) They must not shew the least respect to any idol, nor make mention of the name of their gods, but endeavour to bury the remembrance of them in perpetual oblivion; that the worship of them may never be revived, let the very name of them be forgotten. Look upon idols as filthy detestable things, not to be named without the utmost loathing and detestation. The Jews would not suffer their children to name swine's flesh, because it was forbidden, lest the naming of it should occasion their desiring of it, but if they had occasion to speak of it, they must call it *that strange thing*. It is pity that among Christians the names of the heathen gods are so commonly used, and made so familiar as they are, especially in plays and poems. Let these names which have been set up in rivalry with God be for ever loathed and lost. (3.) They must not countenance others in shewing respect to them. They must not only not swear by themselves, but they must not cause others to swear by them; which supposeth that they must not make any covenants with idolaters, because they in the confirming of their covenants, would swear by their idols; never let Israelites admit such an oath. (4.) They must take heed of these occasions of idolatry, lest by degrees they should arrive at the highest step of it, which was serving false gods, and bowing down to them, against the letter of the second commandment.

3. To be very constant, *ver. 8.* *Cleave unto the Lord your God, i. e.* delight in him, depend upon him, devote yourselves to his glory, and continue so to do to the end, *as you have done unto this day*, ever since you came to Canaan; for being willing to make the best of them, he looks not so far back as the iniquity of Peor. There might be many things amiss among them, but they had not forsaken the Lord their God, and to intimate his exhortation to perseverance with the more pleasing power, for this he praiseth them. Go on and prosper, for the Lord is with you while you are with him. Those that command should commend; the way to make people better, is to make the best of them. You have cleaved to the Lord unto this day, therefore go on to do so, else you lose the praise and recompence of what you have wrought. Your righteousness will not be mentioned unto you, if you turn from it.

11. Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God. 12. Else, if ye do in anywise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, *even* these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: 13. Know for a certainty, that the LORD your God will no more drive out *any of* these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you. 14. And behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth, and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, *and* not one thing has failed thereof. 15. Therefore it shall come to pass, *that* as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you: so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you. 16. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them: then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you.

Here, 1. Joshua directs them what to do that they might persevere in religion, *ver. 11.* Would we cleave to the Lord, and not forsake him, (1.) We must always stand upon our guard; for many a precious soul is lost and ruined through carelessness; take heed therefore, *take good heed to yourselves*, to your souls, so the word is, that the inward man be kept clean from the pollutions of sin, and closely employed in the service of God. God has given us precious souls, with this charge, take good heed to them, keep them with diligence, above all keepings. (2.) What we do in religion we must do from a principal of love, not by constraint or from a slavish fear of God, but of choice and with delight. *Love the Lord your God*, and you will not leave him.

2. He urges God's fidelity to them as an argument why they should be faithful to him, *ver. 14.* *I am going the way of all the earth*, I am old and dying; to die, is to go a journey, a journey to our long home: it is the way of all the earth, the way that all mankind must go, sooner or later. Joshua himself, though so great and good a man, and one that could so ill be spared, cannot be exempted from this common lot. He takes notice of it here, that they might look upon these as his dying words, and regard them accordingly. Or thus, *I am dying*, and leaving you, *ye have not always*, but

but if ye cleave to the Lord he will never leave you. Or thus, Now I am near my end, it is proper to look back upon the years that are past, and in the review I find, and ye yourselves know it, in all your hearts, and in all your souls, by a full conviction on the clearest evidence, and the thing has made an impression upon you. That knowledge doth as good which is seated, not in the head only, but in the heart and soul, and with which we are duly affected; ye know that *not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord spake concerning you*, and he spake a great many. See chap. xxi. 45. God had promised them victory, rest, plenty, his tabernacle among them, &c. and *not one thing had failed of all he had promised*. Now, faith he, has God been thus true to you? Be ye not false to him. It is the apostle's argument for perseverance, Heb. x. 23. *He is faithful that has promised*.

3. He gives them fair warning, what would be the fatal consequences of apostasy, ver. 12, 13, 15, 16. If you go back, know for a certainty it will be your ruin. Observe,

1. How he describes the apostasy which he warns them against. The steps of it would be, ver. 12. growing intimate with idolaters, who would craftily wheedle them, and insinuate themselves into their acquaintance, now they were become lords of the country, to serve their own ends. The next step would be intermarrying with them, drawn to it by their artifices, who would be glad to bestow their children upon these wealthy Israelites, and the consequence of that would be, ver. 16. *serv'g their gods*, which were pretended to be the ancient deities of the country, and bowing down to them. Thus the way of sin is down-hill, and those who have fellowship with sinners, cannot avoid having fellowship with sin. This he represents, (1.) As a base and shameful desertion, it is going back from what ye have so well begun, ver. 12. (2.) As a most perfidious breach of promise, ver. 10. It is a transgression of the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and which yourselves set your hand to. Others sins were transgressions of the law God commanded them, but this was a transgression of the covenant that he commanded them, and amounted to a breach of the relation between God and them, and a forfeiture of all the benefits of the covenant.

2. How he describes the destruction which he warns them of. He tells them, 1. That these remainders of the Canaanites, if they should harbour them, and indulge them, and join in affinity with them, would be snares and traps to them, both to draw them to sin, not only to idolatry, but to all immoralities, which would be the ruin, not only of their virtue, but of their wisdom and sense, their spirit and honour, and also to draw them into foolish bargains, unprofitable projects, and all manner of inconveniences, and having thus by underhand practices decoyed them into one mischief or other, so as to gain advantages against them, they would then act more openly; and be *scourges in their sides*, and *thorns in their eyes*, would perhaps kill or drive away their cattle; burn or steal their corn; alarm or plunder their houses, and would by all ways possible be vexatious to them; for whatever pretences of friendship they might make, a Canaanite, unless professed to the faith and worship of the true God, would in every age hate the true name and sight of an Israelite. See how the punishment would be made to answer the sin, nay, how the sin itself would be the punishment. 2. That the anger of the Lord would be kindled against them. Besides that their making leagues with the Canaanites, would give them the opportunity of doing them a mischief, and would be the fostering of snakes in their bosoms, it would likewise provoke God to become their enemy, and would kindle the fire of his displeasure against them. 3. That all the threatenings of the word would be fulfilled, as the promises had, for the God of eternal truth is faithful to both, ver. 15. *All good things have come upon you according to the promise*, so long as you have kept close to God, to all evil things will come upon you according to the threatening, if you forsake him. Moses had *set before them good and evil*, they had experienced the good, and were now in the enjoyment of it, and the evil would as certainly come, if they were disobedient. As God's promises are not a fool's paradise, so his threatenings are not bugbears. 4. That it would end in the utter ruin of their church and nation, as Moses had foretold. This is three times mentioned here, Your enemies will vex you *until you perish from off this good land*, ver. 13. Again, God will plague you *until he have destroyed you from off this good land*, ver. 15. Heaven and earth will concur to root you out. So that, ver. 16, *ye shall perish from off this good land* it will aggravate their perdition, that the land from which they shall perish is a good land, and a land which God himself had given them, and which therefore he would have secured to them, if they by their wickedness had not thrown themselves out of it. Thus the goodness of the heavenly Canaan and the free and sure grant God has made of it, will aggravate the misery of those that shall for ever be shut out and perish from it. Nothing will make them see how wretched they are, so much as to see how happy they might have been. Joshua thus sets before them the fatal consequences of their apostasy, that knowing the terror of the Lord, they might be persuaded with purpose of heart to cleave to him.

C H A P. XXIV.

This chapter concludes the life and reign of Joshua; in which we have

1. *The great care and pains he took to confirm the people of Israel in the true faith and worship of God, that they might after his death persevere therein. In order to this he called another general assembly of the heads of the congregation of Israel*, ver. 1. *and dealt with them*, (1.) *By way of narrative, recounting the great things God had done for them and their fathers*, ver. 2—13. (2.) *By way of charge to them, in consideration thereof, to serve God*, ver. 14. (3.) *By way of treaty with them, wherein he aims to bring them*. (1.) *To make religion their deliberate choice, and they did so, with reasons for their choice*, ver. 15—18. (2.) *To make it their determinate choice, and to resolve to adhere to it*, ver. 19—24. (3.) *By way of covenant upon that treaty*, ver. 25—28. (2.) *The conclusion of this history, with* (1.) *The death and burial of Joshua*, ver. 29, 30. *And Eleazar*, ver. 33. *And the mention of the burial of Joseph's bones upon the occasion*, ver. 32. (2.) *A general account of the state of Israel at that time*, ver. 31.

1. **A**ND Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and they presented themselves before God. 2. And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, *even Terah the father of Abraham*, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. 3. And I took your father Abraham from the

other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac. 4. And I gave unto Isaac, Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt. 5. I sent Moses also and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did amongst them: and afterward I brought you out. 6. And I brought your fathers out of Egypt: and you came unto the sea, and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and horsemen unto the Red-sea. 7. And when they cried unto the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them, and your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt: and he dwelt in the wilderness a long season. 8. And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, which dwelt on the other side of Jordan; and they fought with you; and I gave them into your hand, that ye might possess their land, and destroy them before you. 9. Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose, and warred against Israel, and sent, and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you: 10. But I would not hearken unto Balaam, therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand. 11. And ye went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho: and the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I delivered them into your hand. 12. And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out from before you, *even the two kings of the Amorites*: but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow. 13. And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them: of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not, do ye eat. 14. ¶ Now therefore, fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which our fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt: and serve ye the LORD.

Joshua thought he had taken his last farewell of Israel, in the solemn charge he gave them in the foregoing chapter, when he said, *I go the way of all the earth*: but God graciously continuing his life longer than he expected, and renewing his strength, he was desirous to improve it for the good of Israel: he did not say, I have taken my leave of them once, and let that serve, but having yet a longer space given him, he summoned them together again, that he might try what more he could do to engage them for God. Note, We must never think our work for God done, till our life is done; and if he lengthen out our days beyond what we thought, we must conclude, it is because he has some farther service for us to do.

The assembly is the same with that in the foregoing chapter, the *elders, heads, judges, and officers of Israel*, ver. 1. But it is here made something more solemn than it was there.

1. The place appointed for their meeting is Shechem, not only because that lay nearer to Joshua than Shiloh; and therefore more convenient now he was infirm and unfit for travel, but because it was the place where Abraham the first trustee of God's covenant with his people, settled at his coming to Canaan, and where God appeared to him, Gen. xii. 6, 7, and near which stood mount Gerizim and Ebal, where the people had renewed their covenant with God at their first coming into Canaan, Josh. viii. 30. Of the promises God had made to their fathers, and of the promises they themselves had made to God, this place might serve to put them in mind.

2. They presented themselves, not only before Joshua, but before God, in this assembly, that is, they came together in a solemn religious manner, as into the special presence of God, and with an eye to him (speaking to them by Joshua; and, it is probable, the service begun with prayer. It is the conjecture of interpreters, that upon this occasion, Joshua ordered the ark of God to be brought by the priests to Shechem, which they say, was but about ten miles from Shiloh, and to be set down in the place of their meeting, which is therefore called, ver. 26, *the sanctuary of the Lord*, the presence of the ark making it so at that time; and this was done to grace the solemnity, and to strike an awe upon the people that attended. We have not now any such sensible tokens of the divine presence, but are to believe that where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, he is as really in the midst of them, as God was where the ark was, and they are indeed presenting themselves before him.

3. Joshua spake to them in God's name, and as from him, in the language of a prophet, ver. 2. *Thus saith the Lord, Jehovah, the great God, and the God of Israel, your God in covenant*, whom therefore you are bound to hear and give heed to. Note, The word of God is to be received by us as his, whoever is the messenger that brings it, whose greatness cannot add to it, nor his meanness diminish from it.

His sermon consists of doctrine and application.

1. The doctrinal part is a history of the great things God had done for his people, and for their fathers before them. God by Joshua recounts the marvels of old, I did so and so. They must know and consider, not only that such and such things were done, but that God did them. It is a series of wonders that is here recorded, and perhaps many more were mentioned by Joshua, which for brevity sake are here omitted. See what God had wrought, (1.) He brought Abraham out of *Ur of the Chaldees*, ver. 2, 3. He and his ancestors had *served other gods* there, for it was the country in which, though celebrated for learning, idolatry, as some think, had its rise, there the world by wisdom knew not God. Abraham who afterwards was the friend of God and the great favourite of heaven, was bred up in idolatry, and lived long in it, till God by grace snatched him as a brand out of that burning. Let them remember that rock out of which they were hewn, and not relapse into that sin from which their fathers by a miracle of free grace were delivered. I took him, saith God, else he had never come out of that sinful state. Hence Abraham's justification is made by the apostle

apostle an instance of God's justifying the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5. (2.) He brought him to Canaan, and built up his family, led him through the land to Shechem, where they now were, multiplied his seed by Ishmael, who begat twelve princes, but at last gave him Isaac the promised son, and in him multiplied his seed. When Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau, God provided an inheritance for Esau elsewhere in mount Seir, that the land of Canaan might be reserved entire for the seed of Jacob, and the posterity of Esau might not pretend to share in it. (3.) He delivered the seed of Jacob out of Egypt with a high hand, ver. 5, 6. rescued them out of the hands of Pharaoh and his host at the Red-sea, ver. 6, 7. The same waters were the Israelites' guard, and the Egyptians' grave, and in answer to prayer; for though we find in the story, that they in that distress murmured against God, Exod. xiv. 11, 12. notice is here taken of their crying to God, he graciously accepted those that prayed to him, and overlooked the folly of those that quarreled with him. (4.) He protected them in the wilderness, where they are said, not to wander, but to dwell for a long season, ver. 7. So wisely were all their motions directed, and so safely were they kept, that even there they had as certain a dwelling-place, as if they had been in a walled city. (5.) He gave them the land of the Amorites, on the other side Jordan, ver. 8. and there defeated the plot of Balak and Balaam against them, so that Balaam could not curse them, as he desired, and therefore Balak durst not fight them, as he designed, and because he designed it, is here said to do it. The turning of Balaam's tongue to bless Israel, when he intended to curse them, is often mentioned as an instance of the divine power put forth in Israel's favour, as remarkable as any other, because in it God proved) and doth still more than we are aware of) his dominion over the powers of darkness, and over the spirits of men. (6.) He brought them safely and triumphantly into Canaan, delivered the Canaanites into their hand, ver. 11. Sent hornets before them, when they were actually engaged in battle with the enemy, which with their stings tormented them, and with their noise terrified them, so that they became a very easy prey to Israel. These dreadful swarms first appeared from their war with Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites, and afterwards in their other battles, ver. 12. God had promised to do this for them, Exod. xxiii. 27, 28. And here Joshua takes notice of the fulfilling of that promise. See Exod. xxiii. 27, 28. Deut. vii. 20. These hornets, it should seem, annoyed the enemy more than the artillery of Israel, therefore he adds, *not with thy sword or bow*. It was purely the Lord's doings. Lastly, they were now in the peaceable possession of a good land, and lived comfortably upon the fruit of other peoples labour, ver. 13.

2. The application of this history of God's mercies to them, is by way of exhortation, to fear and serve God, in gratitude for his favours, and that they might be continued to them, ver. 14. Now therefore, in consideration of all this, 1. *Fear the Lord*, the Lord and his goodness, Hag. iii. 5. Reverence a God of such infinite power, fear to offend him, and to forfeit his goodness. Keep up an awe of majesty, a deference to his authority, a dread of his displeasure, and a continual regard to his all-seeing eye upon you. 2. Let your practice be consonant to this principle, and serve him, both by the outward acts of religious worship, and every instance of obedience in your whole conversation, and this *in sincerity and truth*, with a single eye and an upright heart, and inward impressions, answerable to outward expressions; that is, the truth in the inward part which God requires, Psal. li. 6. For what good will it do us to dissemble with a God that searches the heart; 3. *Put away the strange gods*, both Chaldean and Egyptian idols, for those they were most in danger of revolting to. It should seem by this charge, which is repeated, ver. 23. that there were some among them that privately kept in their closets the images or pictures of these dunghill-deities, which came to their hands from their ancestors, as heir-looms of their families, though it may be they did not worship them; these Joshua earnestly urgeth them to throw away, deface them, destroy them, lest you be tempted to serve them. Jacob pressed his household to do this, at this very place; for when they gave him up the little images they had, he buried them under the oak that was by Shechem, Gen. xxxv. 2, 4. Perhaps the oak mentioned here, ver. 26. was the same oak, or another in the same place, which might be called the oak of reformation, as there was idolatrous oaks.

15. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. 16. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods. 17. For the LORD our God, he it is that brought us up, and our fathers, out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed. 18. And the LORD drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwell in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD, for he is our God. 19. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD; for he is an holy God: he is a jealous God, he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. 20. If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good. 21. And the people said unto Joshua, Nay, but we will serve the LORD. 22. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen you the LORD to serve him, And they said, We are witnesses. 23. Now therefore put away (said he) the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel. 24. And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey. 25. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute, and an ordinance in Shechem. 26. ¶ And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.

27. And Joshua said unto all the people; Behold, the stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the LORD which he spake unto us; it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest you deny your God. 28. So Joshua let the people depart every man unto his inheritance.

Never was any treaty carried on with better management, nor brought to a better issue, than this of Joshua's with the people, to engage them to serve God: The manner of his dealing with them shews him to be in earnest, and that his heart was much upon it, to leave them under all possible obligations to cleave to him, particularly the obligation of a choice, and of a covenant.

1. Would it be any obligation upon them, if they made the service of God their choice, here he puts them to their choice; not as if it were antecedently indifferent whether they served God or no, or as if it were at their liberty to refuse his service; but because it would have a mighty influence upon their perseverance in religion, if they embraced it with the reason of men, and with the resolution of men. These two things he here brings them to.

(1.) He brings them to embrace their religion rationally and intelligently, for it is a reasonable service. The will of man is apt to glory in his native liberty, and, in a jealousy for the honour of that, adheres with most pleasure to that which is its own choice, and is not imposed upon it, therefore it is God's will that this service should be, not our chance or a force upon us, but our choice.

Accordingly, 1. Joshua fairly puts the matter to their choice, ver. 15. Where, (1.) He proposeth the candidates that stand for the election. The Lord, Jehovah, on one side, and on the other side, either the gods of their ancestors, which would pretend to recommend themselves to those that were fond of antiquity, and that which was received by tradition from their fathers, or the gods of their neighbours, the Amorites, in whose land they dwell, which would insinuate themselves into the affections of those that were complaisant and fond of good fellowship. (2.) He supposeth there were those to whom, upon some account or other, it would seem evil to serve the Lord. There are prejudices and objections which some people raise against religion, which, with those that are inclined to the world and the flesh, have a great force. It seems evil to them, hard and unreasonable to be obliged to deny themselves, mortify the flesh, take up their cross, &c. But being in a state of probation, it is fit there should be some difficulties in the way, else there were no trial. (3.) He refers it to themselves, *choose you whom you will serve*, choose this day, now the matter is laid thus plainly before you, speedily bring it to a head, and do not stand hesitating. Elijah long after this referred the decision of the controversy between Jehovah and Baal to the consciences of those with whom he was treating, 1 Kings xviii. 21. Joshua's putting of the matter here to this issue, plainly intimates two things, (1.) That it is the will of God we should every one of us make religion our series and deliberate choice. Let us state the matter impartially to ourselves, weigh things in an even balance, and then determine for that which we find to be really true and good. Let us resolve upon a life of serious godliness, not merely because we know no other way, but because really upon search we find no better. (2.) That religion hath so much self-evident reason and righteousness on its side, that it may safely be referred to every man that allows himself a free thought, either to choose or refuse it, for the merits of the cause are so plain, that no considerate man can do otherwise but choose it. The case is so clear that it determines itself. Perhaps Joshua designed, by putting them to their choice, thus to try if there were any among them, who upon so fair an occasion given, would shew a coolness and indifference towards the service of God; whether they would desire time to consider and consult their friends, before they gave in their answer; that if any such should appear he might set a mark upon them, and warn the rest to avoid them. (4.) He directs their choice in this matter, by an open declaration of his own resolutions. *But as for me and my house, whatever you do, we will serve the Lord*, and I hope you will all be of the same mind. Here he resolves, 1. For himself, *as for me I will serve the Lord*. Note, The service of God is nothing below the greatest of men; it is so far from being a diminution and disparagement to princes, and those of the first rank to be religious, that it is their greatest honour, and adds the brightest crown of glory to them. Observe how positive he is, *I will serve God*. It is no abridgement of our liberty to bind ourselves with a bond to God. 6. For his house, *i. e.* his family, his children and servants, such as were immediately under his eye and care, his inspection and influence. Joshua was a ruler, a judge in Israel, yet he will not make his necessary application to public affairs an excuse for the neglect of family religion. Those that have the charge of many families, as magistrates and ministers, must take special care of their own, 1 Tim. 3, 4, 5. *I and my house will serve God*. 1. Not my house without me. He would not engage them to that work which he could not set his own hand to. As some, who would have their children and servants good, but will not be so themselves; that is, they would have them go to heaven, but intend to go to hell themselves. 2. Not I, without my house. He supposeth he might be forsaken by his people, but in his house, where his authority was greater, and more immediate, there he would over-rule. Note, When we cannot bring as many as we would to the service of God, we must bring as many as we can, and extend our endeavours to the utmost sphere of our activity; if we cannot reform the land, let us put away iniquity far from our own tabernacle. 3. First I, and then my house. Note, Those that lead and rule in other things, should be first in the service of God, and go before in the best things. Lastly, he resolves to do this, whatever others did. Though all the families of Israel should revolt from God, and serve idols, yet Joshua and his family will steadfastly adhere to the God of Israel. Note, Those that resolve to serve God, must not stick at being singular in it, not be drawn by the crowd to forsake his service. Those that are bound for heaven, must be willing to swim against the stream, and must not do as the most do, but as the best do.

2. The matter being thus put to their choice, they immediately determine it by a free, rational, and intelligent declaration, for the God of Israel, against all competitors whatsoever, ver. 16, 17, 18. Here, 1. They concur with Joshua in his resolution, being influenced by the example of so great a man, who had been so great a blessing to them, ver. 18. *we also will serve the Lord*. See how much good great men might do, if they were but zealous in religion, by their influence on their inferiors. 2. They startle at the thought of apostatizing from God, ver. 16. *God forbid*, the word intimates the greatest dread and detestation imaginable; far be it, far be it from us, that we or ours should ever forsake the Lord to serve other gods. We must be perfectly lost to all sense of justice, gratitude, and honour, ere we can harbour the least thought of such a thing. Thus must our hearts rise against all temptations to desert the service of God; get thee behind me Satan. 3. They give very substantial reasons for their choice, to shew that they did not make it purely in complaisance to Joshua, but from a full conviction of the reasonableness and equity of it. They make this choice for

and in consideration, (1.) Of the many great and very kind things God had done for them, bringing them out of Egypt through the wilderness into Canaan, ver. 17, 18. Thus they repeat to themselves Joshua's sermon, and then express their sincere compliance with the intentions of it. (2.) Of the relation they stood in to God, and his covenant with them, we will serve the Lord, ver. 18. for he is our God, who hath graciously engaged himself by promise to us, and to whom we have by solemn vow engaged ourselves.

(2.) He brings them to embrace their religion resolutely, and to express a full purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord. Now he hath them in a good mind he follows his blow, and drives the nail to the head, that it might, if possible, be a nail in a sure place. Fast bind, fast find.

1. In order to this he sets before them the difficulties of religion, and that in it which might be thought discouraging, ver. 19, 20. *Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God*, or as it is in the Hebrew, *he is the holy Gods*, intimating the mystery of the Trinity, three in one; *holy, holy, holy, holy Father, holy Son, holy Spirit, He will not forgive.* But *if you forsake him, he will do you hurt.* Certainly Joshua doth not intend hereby to deter them from the service of God as impracticable and dangerous. But, 1. He perhaps intends to represent here the suggestions of seducers, who tempted Israel from their God, and from the service of him, with such insinuations as these; that he was a hard master, his work impossible to be done, and he not to be pleased, and if displeased implacable and revengeful; that he would confine their respects to himself only, and would not suffer them to shew the least kindness for any other, and that herein he was very unlike the gods of the nations, which were easy, and neither holy nor jealous. It is probable, this was then commonly objected against the Jewish religion, as it has all along been the artifice of Satan ever since he tempted our first parents thus to misrepresent God and his laws, as harsh and severe: and Joshua by his tone and manner of speaking might make them perceive he intended it as an objection, and would put it to them how they would keep their ground against the force of it. Or, 2. He thus expresseth his godly jealousy over them, and his fear concerning them, that notwithstanding the professions they now made of zeal for God and his service, they would afterwards draw back, and if they did, they would find him just and jealous to revenge it. Or, 3. He resolves to let them know the worth of it, and what strict terms they must expect to stand upon with God, that they might sit down and count the cost. *Ye cannot serve the Lord*, except you put away all other gods, for he is holy and jealous, and will by no means admit a rival, and therefore you must be very watchful and careful, for it is at your peril if you desert his service; better you had never known it. Thus though our master has assured us that *his yoke is easy*, yet, left upon the presumption of that we should grow remiss and careless, he hath also told us, that the gate is strait, and the way narrow that leads to life, that we may therefore strive to enter, and not seek only. *You cannot serve God and mammon*, therefore if you resolve to serve God, you must renounce all competitors with him. You cannot serve God in your own strength, nor will he forgive your transgressions for any righteousness of your own, but *all the seed of Israel must be justified and must glory in the Lord alone*, as their righteousness and strength, Isa. xlv. 21, 23. they must therefore come off from all confidence in their own sufficiency, else their purposes would be to no purpose. Or, 4. Joshua thus urges to them the seeming discouragements which lay in their way, that he might sharpen their resolutions, and draw from them a promise yet more express and solemn, that they would continue faithful to God and their religion. He draws it from them that they might catch at it the more earnestly, and hold it the faster.

2. Notwithstanding this remonstrance he makes of the difficulties of religion, they declare a firm and fixed resolution to continue and persevere therein, ver. 21. *Nay, but we will serve the Lord*, we will think never the worse of him for his being a holy and jealous God, nor for his confining his servants to worship himself only. Justly will he consume them that forsake him, but we never will forsake him; not only we have a good mind to serve him, and we hope we shall, but we are at a point, we cannot bear to hear any intreaties to leave him, or to turn from following after him, Ruth i. 17. in the strength of divine grace we are resolved that we will serve the Lord. This resolution they repeat with an explication, ver. 24. *The Lord our God will we serve*, not only be called his servants, and wear his livery only, but our religion shall rule us in every thing, and his voice will we obey. And in vain do we call him master and Lord, if we do not the things which he saith, Luke vi. 46. This last promise they make in answer to the charge Joshua gave them, ver. 23. that in order to their perseverance they should, (1.) Put away the images and relics of the strange gods, and not keep any of the tokens of those other lovers in their custody, if they resolved their Maker should be their husband; they promise in this to obey his voice. (2.) That they should incline their hearts to the God of Israel, use their authority over their own hearts to engage them for God, not only to set their affections upon him, but to settle them so. These terms they agree to, and thus, as Joshua explains the bargain, they strike it, *The Lord our God will we serve.*

3. The service of God being thus made their deliberate choice, Joshua binds them to it by a solemn covenant, ver. 25. Moses had twice publicly ratified this covenant between God and Israel, at mount Sinai, Exod. xxiv. and in the plains of Moab, Deut. xxix. 1. Joshua had likewise done it once, chap. viii. 31. and now the second time. It is here called a statute and an ordinance because of the strength and perpetuity of its obligation; and because even this covenant bound them to no more than what they were antecedently bound to by the divine command.

Now to give it the formalities of a covenant, (1.) He calls witnesses, no other but themselves, ver. 22. *Ye are witnesses that ye have chosen the Lord*; he promiseth himself that they would never forget the solemnities of this day, but if hereafter they should break this covenant, he assures them that the professions and promises they had now made, would certainly rise up in judgment against them, and condemn them; and they agreed to it, *we are witnesses*; let us be judged out of our own mouths, if ever we be false to our God. (2.) He put it in writing, and inserted it as we find it here in the sacred canon; he wrote it in the book of the law, ver. 25. in that original which was laid up in the side of the ark, and from thence, probably, it was transcribed into the several copies which the princes had

for the use of each tribe. There it was written that their obligation to religion by the divine precept, and that by their own promise, might remain on record together. (3.) He erected a memorandum of it, for the benefit of those who perhaps were not conversant with writings, ver. 23, 27. He set up a great stone under an oak, as a monument of this covenant, and perhaps wrote an inscription upon it, (by which stones are made to speak) signifying the intention of it. When he saith it had heard what was past, he tacitly upbraids the people with the hardness of their hearts, as if this stone had heard to as good purpose as some of them; and if they should forget what was now done, this stone would so far preserve the remembrance of it, as to reproach them for their stupidity and carelessness, and be a witness against them.

The matter being thus settled, Joshua dismissed this assembly of the grandees of Israel, ver. 28. and took his last leave of them, well satisfied in having done his part, by which he had delivered his soul; if they perished, their blood would be upon their own heads.

29. ¶ And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old. 30. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-herah, which is in mount Ephraim, on the north-side of the hill of Gaath. 31. And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD that he had done for Israel. 32.

¶ And the bones of Joseph which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob brought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem, for an hundred pieces of silver; and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph. 33. And Eleazar the son of Aaron died, and they buried him in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which was given him in mount Ephraim.

This book which began with triumphs, here ends with funerals, by which all the glory of man is stained.

1. Here is Joseph buried, ver. 32. He died about two hundred years before in Egypt, but gave commandment concerning his bones, that they should not rest in their grave until Israel had rest in the land of promise; now therefore the children of Israel, who had brought this coffin full of bones with them out of Egypt, carried it along with them in all their marches through the wilderness (the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasse, it is probable, taking particular care of it) and kept it in their camp. (ii) Canaan was perfectly reduced, now at last they depopulated it in that piece of ground which his father gave him near Shechem, Gen. xlviii. 22. Probably it was upon this occasion that Joshua called for all Israel to meet him at Shechem, ver. 1. to attend Joseph's coffin to the grave there, so that the sermon in this chapter served both for Joseph's funeral sermon, and his own farewell sermon; and if it were as is supposed in the last year of his life, the occasion might very well mind him of his own death being at hand, for he was now just at the same age that his illustrious ancestor Joseph was arrived to when he died, one hundred and ten years old; compare ver. 24 with Gen. i. 25.

2. Here is the death and burial of Joshua, ver. 29, 30. We are not told how long he lived after the coming of Israel into Canaan. Dr. Lightfoot thinks it was about seventeen years, but the Jewish chronologers generally say, it was about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years. He is here called the servant of the Lord, the same title that was given to Moses, chap. i. 1. when mention was made of his death; for though Joshua was in many respects inferior to Moses, yet in this he was equal with him, that, according as his work was he approved himself a diligent and faithful servant of God. And he that traded with his two talents, had the same approbation that he had who traded with five, *well done good and faithful servant.* Joshua's burying-place is here said to be on the north-side of the hill Gaath, or the quaking hill; the Jews say it was so called, because it trembled at the burial of Joshua, to upbraid the people of Israel with their stupidity, in that they did not lament the death of that great and good man so as they ought to have done. Thus at the death of Christ, our Joshua, the earth quaked. The learned Bishop Patrick observes, that there is no mention of any days of mourning for Joshua, as there were for Moses and Aaron, in which, he saith, St. Hierom and other of the fathers, think there is a mystery, viz. That under the law, when life and immortality were not brought to so clear a light as they are now, they had reason to mourn and weep for the death of their friends, but now Jesus, our Joshua, has opened the kingdom of heaven, we may rejoice rather.

3. Here is the death and burial of Eleazar the chief priest, who, it is probable, died about the same time that Joshua did, as Aaron in the same year with Moses, ver. 33. The Jews say, that Eleazar a little before he died called the elders together, and gave them a charge as Joshua had done. He was buried in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which came to him not by descent, for then it would have pertained to his father first, nor had the priests any cities in mount Ephraim, but either it fell to him by marriage, as the Jews conjecture, or it was freely bestowed upon him, to build a country-seat in, by some pious Israelite that was well-affected to the priesthood, for it is here said to be given him; and there he buried his dear father.

Lastly, We have a general idea given us of the state of Israel at this time, ver. 31. While Joshua lived, religion was kept up among them under his care and influence, but soon after he and his contemporaries died it went to decay, so much oftentimes doth one head hold up: how well it is for the Gospel Church, that Christ, our Joshua, is still with it by his Spirit, and will be always, even unto the end of the world?

AN
E X P O S I T I O N,
WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,
Upon the BOOK of
J U D G E S.

This is called in the Hebrew *Sepher Shophetim*, the *Book of Judges*, which the Syriac and Arabic versions enlarge upon and call it, *The book of the Judges of the children of Israel*; the judgments of that nation being peculiar, so were their Judges, whose office differed vastly from that of the Judges of other nations. The LXX. intitles it only *Kpñai*, Judges. It is the history of the *commonwealth of Israel*, during the government of the Judges from Othniel to Eli; so much of it as God saw fit to transmit to us. It contains the history (according to Dr. Lightfoot's computation) of two hundred and ninety-nine years; reckoning to Othniel of Judah, forty years; to Ehud of Benjamin, eighty years; to Barak of Naphtali, forty years; to Gideon of Manasseh, forty years; to Abimelech his son, three years; to Tola of Issachar, twenty-three; to Jair of Manasseh, twenty-two; to Jephthah of Manasseh, six; to Ibzan of Judah, seven; to Elon of Zebulun, ten; to Abdon of Ephraim, eight; to Samson of Dan, twenty; in all two hundred and ninety-nine. As for the years of their servitude, as where Eglon is said to oppress them eighteen years, and Jabin twenty years, and so some others, those must be reckoned to fall in with some or other of the years of the Judges. The Judges here appeared to have been of eight several tribes; that honour was thus diffused, until at last it centered in Judah. Eli and Samuel, the two Judges that fall not within this book, were of Levi. It seems there was no Judge of Reuben or Simeon, Gad or Asher. The history of these Judges in their order we have in this book, to the end of chap. xvi. And then in the five last chapters we have an account of some particular memorable events which happened, as the story of Ruth did, *Ruth i. 1. in the days when the Judges ruled*, but not certain in which Judge's days; but they are put together at the end of the book, that the thread of the general history might not be interrupted. Now as to the state of the commonwealth of Israel during this period, 1. They do not appear here either so great or so good as one might have expected the character of such a peculiar people should have been; that were governed by such laws, and enriched by such promises. We find them wretchedly corrupted and wretchedly oppressed by their neighbours about them, and no where in all the book, either in war or council, do they make any figure proportionable to their glorious entry into Canaan. What shall we say to it? God would hereby shew us the lamentable imperfection of all persons and things under the sun, that we may look for complete holiness and happiness in the other world, and not in this. Yet, 2. We may hope that though the historian in this book enlargeth most upon their provocations and grievances, yet that there was a face of religion upon the land; and however there were those among them that were drawn aside to idolatry, yet the tabernacle service according to the law of Moses was kept up, and there were many that attended it. Historians record not the common course of justice and commerce in a nation, taking that for granted, but only the wars, and disturbances that happen, but the reader must consider the other to balance the blackness of them. 3. It should seem that in these times each tribe had very much its government in ordinary within itself, and acted separately, without one common head, or council, which occasioned many differences among themselves, and kept them from being or doing any thing considerable. 4. The government of the Judges was not constant but occasional; when it is said that after Ehud's victory the land rested eighty years, and after Barak's forty, it is not certain that they lived, much less that they governed, so long; but they and the rest were raised up, and animated by the Spirit of God to do particular service to the public when there was occasion, to *avenge Israel of their enemies*, and to purge Israel of their idolatries, which are the two things principally meant by their judging Israel. Yet Deborah as a prophetess, was attended for judgment by all Israel, before there was occasion for her agency in war, *Judges iv. 4.* 5. During the government of the Judges God was in a more especial manner Israel's king, so Samuel tells them when they were resolved to throw off this form of government, *1 Sam. xii. 12.* God would try what his own law and the constitutions of that would do to keep them in order, and it proved that when *there was no king in Israel, every man did that which was right in his own eyes*; he therefore, towards the latter end of this time, made the government of the Judges more constant and universal than it was at first, and at length gave them David, a king after his own heart; then, and not till then, Israel began to flourish; which should make us very thankful for magistrates, both supreme and subordinate, for they are *ministers of God unto us for good*. Four of the Judges of Israel are canonized, *Heb. xi. 33.* Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah. The learned Bishop Patrick thinks the prophet Samuel was penman of this Book.

C H A P. I.

This chapter gives us a particular account what sort of progress the several tribes of Israel made in the reducing of Canaan after the death of Joshua. He did (as we say) break the neck of that great work, and put it into such a posture, that they might easily have perfected it in due time, if they had not been wanting to themselves: what they did in order hereunto, and wherein they came short, we are here told. 1. The united tribes of Judah and Simeon did bravely. (1.) God appointed Judah to begin, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Judah took Simeon to act in conjunction with him, ver. 3. (3.) They succeeded in their enterprises against Bezek, ver. 4—7. Jerusalem, ver. 8. Hebron and Debir, ver. 9—15. Horma, Gaza, and other places, ver. 17, 18, 19. (4.) Yet where there were chariots of iron, their hearts failed them, ver. 19. Mention is made of the Kenites settling among them, ver. 16. 2. The other tribes in comparison with these did but sneakingly. (1.) Benjamin failed, ver. 21. (2.) The house of Joseph did well against Beth-el, ver. 22—26. but in other places did not improve their advantages, nor Manasseh, ver. 27, 28. nor Ephraim, ver. 29. (3.) Zebulun spared the Canaanites, ver. 30. (4.) Ashur truckled worse than any of them to the Canaanites, ver. 31, 32. (5.) Naphtali was kept out of the full possession of several of his cities, ver. 33. (6.) Dan was straitened by the Amorites, ver. 34. No account is given of Issachar, nor of the two tribes and a half on the other side Jordan.

1. **N**OW after the death of Joshua, it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? 2. And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand. 3. And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may

fight against the Canaanites, and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him. 4. And Judah went up, and the LORD delivered the Canaanites, and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men. 5. And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites, and the Perizzites. 6. But Adoni-bezek fled, and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs, and his great toes. 7. And Adoni-bezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered *their meat* under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died. 8. (Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire.

Here, 1. The children of Israel consult the oracle of God for direction, which of all the tribes should first attempt to clear their country of the Canaanites, and to animate and encourage the rest. It was after the death of Joshua; while he lived, he directed them, and all the tribes were obedient to him, but when he died he left no successor in the same authority that he had had; but the people must consult the breast-plate of judgment, and thence receive the word of command, for God himself, as he was their King, so he was the Lord of their hosts. The question they ask is, *Who shall go up first?* ver. 1. By this time we may suppose they were so multiplied, that the places they were in possession of began to be too strait for them, and they must thrust out the enemy to make room, now they inquire, who should first take up arms? Whether each tribe was ambitious of being first, and so strove for the honour of it, or whether each was afraid of being first, and so strove to decline it, doth not appear; but by common consent the matter was referred to God himself, who is fittest both to dispose of honours, and to cut out work.

2. God appointed that Judah should go up first, and promised him success, *ver. 2. I have delivered the land into his hand to be possessed, and therefore will deliver the enemy into his hand, that keeps him out of possession to be destroyed.* And why must Judah be his first undertaking? (1.) Judah was the most numerous and powerful tribe, and therefore let Judah venture first. Note, God appoints service according to the strength he has given. Those that are most able, from them most work is expected. (2.) Judah was first in dignity, and therefore must be first in duty. He it is whom *his brethren must praise*, and therefore he it is that must lead in perilous services. Let the burden of honour and the burden of work go together. (3.) Judah was first served; the lot came up for Judah first, and therefore Judah must first fight. (4.) Judah was the tribe out of which our Lord was to spring: So that in Judah, Christ the lion of the tribe of Judah went before them. Christ engaged the powers of darkness first, and foiled them, which animates us for our conflicts; and it is in him that we are more than conquerors. Observe, The service and the success are put together, Judah shall go up, let him do his part, and then he shall find, *I have delivered the land into his hand.* His service will not avail unless God give the success; but God will not give the success, unless he vigorously apply himself to the service.

3. Judah hereupon prepares to go up, but courts his brother and neighbour the tribe of Simeon (the lot of which tribe fell within that of Judah, and was assigned out of it) to join forces with him, *ver. 3.* Observe here, 1. That the strongest should not despise, but desire the assistance even of those that are weaker. Judah was the most considerable of all the tribes, and Simeon the least considerable, and yet Judah begs Simeon's friendship, and prays an aid from him; the head cannot say to the foot, *I have no need of thee, for we are members one of another.* 2. Those that crave assistance, must be ready to give assistance; *come with me into my lot, and then I will go with thee into thine.* It becomes Israelites to help one another against Canaanites: and all Christians, even those of different tribes, to strengthen one another's hands against the common interests of Satan's kingdom. Those who thus help one another in love, have reason to hope that God will graciously help them both.

4. The confederate forces of Judah and Simeon take the field. *Judah went up, ver. 4. and Simeon with him, ver. 3.* It is probable Caleb was commander in chief in this expedition, for who so fit as he who had both an old man's head and a young man's hand, the experience of age and the vigour of youth? *Josh. xiv, 10, 11.* and who, as should seem by what follows, *ver. 10, 11.* was not yet in possession of his own allotment. It was happy for them they had such a general, that according to his name, was all heart. Some think that the Canaanites were got together into a body, a formidable body, when Israel consulted who should go *fight against them*, and that they then began to stir when they heard of the death of Joshua, whose name had been so dreadful to them; but, if so, it proved they did but meddle to their own hurt.

5. God gave them great success. Whether they invaded the enemy, or the enemy first gave them the alarm, *The Lord delivered them into their hand, ver. 4.* Though the army of Judah was strong and bold, yet the victory is attributed to God; he *delivered the Canaanites into their hand*, having given them authority, he here gives them ability to destroy them; put it in their power, and so tried their obedience to his command, which was, *utterly to cut them off.* Bishop Patrick observes upon this, that we meet not with such religious expressions in the heathen writers, concerning the success of their arms, as we have here and elsewhere in the sacred history; I wish such pious acknowledgements of the divine providence were not grown into disuse at this time, with many that are called Christians. Now, (1.) We are told how the army of the Canaanites was routed in the field, in or near Bezek, the place where they drew up, which afterwards Saul made the place of a general rendezvous, *1 Sam. xi. 8.* he slew ten thousand men, which blow, if followed, could not but be a very great weakening to those that were brought already so very low. (2.) How their king was taken and mortified, Adoni-bezek, lord of Bezek, so it signifies. There have been those that *called their lands by their own names*, *Psal. xlix. 11.* but here was one (and there has been many another) that called himself by his land's name. He was taken prisoner after the battle, and we are here told how they used him, they cut off his thumbs to disfit him for fighting, and his great toes that he might not be able to run away, *ver. 6.* It had been barbarous thus to triumph over a man in misery, and that lay at their mercy, but that he was a devoted Canaanite, and one that had in like manner abused others, which probably they had heard of. Josephus says, they cut off his hands and his feet, probably supposing those more likely to be mortal wounds, than only the cutting off his thumbs and his great toes. But this indignity they did him extorted from him an acknowledgment of the righteousness of God, *ver. 7.* Where observe, (1.) What a great man this Adoni-bezek had been, how great in the field, where armies fell before him? How great at home, where kings were *set with the dogs of his stock*; and yet now himself a prisoner, and reduced to the extremity of meanness and disgrace. See how changeable this world, and how slippery its high places are. Let not the highest be proud, nor the strongest secure, for they know not how low they may be brought before they die. (2.) What desolations he had made among his neighbours, he had wholly subdued seventy kings, to that degree as to have them his prisoners: he that was the chief person in a city was then called a king, and the greatness of their title did but aggravate their disgrace, and fired the pride of him that insulted over them. We cannot suppose that Adoni-bezek had seventy of these petty princes at once his slaves, but first and last, in the course of his reign, he had thus deposed and abused so many, who perhaps were many of them kings of the same cities that successively opposed him, and whom he thus treated to please his own imperious barbarous fancy, and for terror to others. It seems the Canaanites had been wasted by civil wars, and those bloody ones among themselves, which would very much facilitate the conquest of them by Israel. Judah (saith Dr. Lightfoot) in conquering Adoni-bezek, did in effect, conquer seventy kings. (3.) How justly he was treated as he had treated others. Thus the righteous God sometimes in his providence makes the punishment to answer the sin, and observes an equality in his judgments; the spoiler shall be spoiled, and the *treacherous dealer dealt treacherously with*, *Isa. xxxiii. 1.* And they that *showed no mercy*, shall have *no mercy showed them*, *Jam. ii. 13.* See *Rev. xiii. 10.—xviii. 6.* (4.) How honestly he owned the righteousness of God herein. *As I have done, so as the Lord requited me.* See the power of conscience, when God by his judgments awakens it, how it brings sin to remembrance, and subscribes to the justice of God. He that in his pride had set God at defiance, now yields to him, and reflects with as much regret upon the kings under his table, as ever he had looked upon them with pleasure when he had them there. He seems to own that he was better dealt with, than he had dealt with his prisoners; for though the Israelites maimed him (according to the law of retaliation, *an eye for an eye, so a thumb for a thumb*) yet they did not put him *under the table* to be fed with the crumbs there; because though the other might well be looked upon as an act of justice, that would have favoured more of pride and haughtiness than did become an Israelite.

6. Particular notice is taken of the conquest of Jerusalem, *ver. 8.* Our translators judge it spoken of here as done formerly in Joshua's time, and only repeated on occasion of Adoni-bezek's dying there, and therefore read it, "they had fought against Jerusalem," and put this verse in a parenthesis; but the original speaks of it as a thing now done; and that seems most probable, because it is said to be done by the children of Judah in particular, not by all Israel in general, whom Joshua commanded. Joshua indeed conquered and slew Adoni-bezek, king of Jerusalem, *Josh. x.* But we read not there of his taking the city; probably, while he was pursuing his conquests elsewhere, this Adoni-bezek, a neighbouring prince, got possession of it, whom having conquered in the field, the city fell into their hands, and they slew the inhabitants, except those who retreated into the castle, and held out there till David's time, and they *set the city on fire*, in token of their detestation of the idolatry wherewith it had been deeply infected, yet probably not so as utterly to consume it, but to leave convenient habitations for as many as they had to put into the possession of it.

9. ¶ And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites that dwelt in the mountain, and in the south, and in the valley. 10. And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron, (now the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba) and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai. 11. And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir: (and the name of Debir before was Kirjath-sepher.) 12. And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achish my daughter to wife. 13. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achish his daughter to wife. 14. And it came to pass when she came to him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted from off her ass: and Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou? 15. And she said unto him, Give me a blessing: for thou hast given me a south-land, give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs. 16. ¶ And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up out of the city of palm-trees with the children of Judah, into the wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south of Arad, and they went and dwelt among the people. 17. And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it: (and the name of the city was called Hormah.) 18. Also Judah took Gaza with the coast thereof; and Askelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof. 19. And the LORD was with Judah, and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain, but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron: 20. And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak.

We have here a farther account of that glorious and successful campaign which Judah and Simeon made.

1. The lot of Judah was pretty well cleared of the Canaanites, yet not thoroughly. Those that *dwelt in the mountain* (the mountains that were round about Jerusalem) were driven out, *ver. 9—19.* but those in the valley kept their ground against them, having *chariots of iron*, such as we read of *Josh. xvii. 16.* Here the men of Judah failed, and thereby spoiled the influence, which otherwise their example hitherto might have had on the rest of the tribes, who followed them in this instance of their cowardice, rather than in all the other instances of their courage. They had iron chariots, and therefore it was thought not safe to attack them; but had not Israel God on their side, *whose chariots are thousands of angels*, *Psal. lxxviii. 17.* before whom these iron chariots would be but as stubble to the fire? Had not God expressly promised by the oracle, *ver. 2.* to give them success against the Canaanites in this very expedition, without excepting those that had iron chariots? Yet they suffered their fears to prevail against their faith, they could not trust God under any disadvantages, and therefore durst not face the iron chariots, but meanly withdrew their forces, then when with one bold stroke they might have completed their victories, and it proved of pernicious consequence. They did run well, what hindered them? *Gal. v. 7.*

2. Caleb was put in possession of Hebron, which, though given him by Joshua ten or twelve years ago, (as Dr. Lightfoot computes) yet being employed in public service, for the settling of the tribes, which he preferred before his own private interests, it seems he did not till now make himself master of it; so well content was that good man to serve others, while he left himself to be served last; few are like minded, *for all seek their own*, *Phil. ii. 20, 21.* Yet now the men of Judah all came in to his assistance for the reducing of Hebron, *ver. 10.* slew the sons of Anak, and put him in possession of it, *ver. 20.* They gave Hebron unto Caleb. And now Caleb that he might return the kindness of his countrymen, is impatient to see Debir reduced, and put into the hands of the men of Judah, to expedite which, he proffers his daughter to the person that will undertake to command in the siege of that important place, *ver. 11, 12.* Othniel bravely undertakes it, wins the town and the lady, *ver. 13.* And by his wife's interest and management with her father, gains a very good inheritance for himself and his family, *ver. 14, 15.* We had this passage before, *Josh. xv. 16—19.* where it was largely explained and improved.

3. Simeon got ground of the Canaanites in his border, *ver. 17, 18.* the eastern part of Simeon's lot, they destroyed the Canaanites in Zephath, and called it Hormah, *destruction*; adding this to some other devoted cities not far off, which they had some time ago, with good reason, called by that name, *Numb. xxi. 2, 3.* And this perhaps was the complete performance of the vow they then made, that they would utterly destroy these cities of the Canaanites in the south. In the western part they took Gaza, Askelon, and Ekron, cities of the Philistines; gained present possession of the cities, but not destroying the inhabitants, they in process of time recovered the cities,

cities, and proved inveterate enemies to the Israel of God, and no better could come of doing their work by the halves.

4. The Kenites gained a settlement in the tribe of Judah, choosing it there, rather than in any other tribe, because it was the strongest, and there they hoped to be safe and quiet, *ver. 16.* These were the posterity of Jethro, who either went with Israel when Moses invited them, *Numb. x. 29.* or met them about the same place, when they came up from their wanderings in the wilderness thirty-eight years after, and went with them then to Canaan, Moses having promised them that they should fare as Israel fared, *Numb. x. 32.* They had at first seated themselves in the city of palm-trees, that is, Jericho, a city which never was to be rebuilt, and therefore the fitter for them who dwell in tents, and did not mind building. But afterwards they removed into the wilderness of Judah, either out of their affection to that place, because solitary and retired, or out of their affection to that tribe, which perhaps had been in a particular manner kind to them. Yet we find the tent of Jael, who was of that family, far north, in the lot of Naphtali, when Sisera took shelter there, *Judges iv. 17.* This respect Israel shewed them, to let them fix where they pleased, being a quiet people, that wherever they were, were content with a little. They that molested none, were molested by none. *Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.*

21. And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day. 22. ¶ And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Beth-el: and the LORD was with them. 23. And the house of Joseph sent to desery Beth-el: (now the name of the city before was Luz) 24. And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Shew us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will shew thee mercy. 25. And when he shewed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword: but they let go the man and all his family. 26. And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz: which is the name thereof unto this day. 27. ¶ Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. 28. And it came to pass when Israel was strong that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out. 29. ¶ Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwell in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell in Gezer among them. 30. ¶ Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol: but the Canaanites dwell among them, and became tributaries. 31. ¶ Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor Achzib, nor Helbah, nor Aphik, nor of Rehob. 32. But the Asherites dwell among the Canaanites the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out. 33. ¶ Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shehem, nor the inhabitants of Beth-anah; but he dwelt among the Canaanites the inhabitants of the land: nevertheless, the inhabitants of Beth-shehem and of Beth-anah, became tributaries unto them. 34. And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley. 35. But the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres in Aijalon and in Shalbim: yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries. 36. And the coast of the Amorites was from the going up to Akkrabbim, from the rock, and upward.

We are now told upon what terms the rest of the tribes stood with the Canaanites that remained.

1. Benjamin neglected to drive the Jebusites out of that part of the city of Jerusalem which fell to their lot, *ver. 21.* Judah had set them a good example, and gained them great advantages by what they did, *ver. 9.* but they did not follow the blow for want of resolution.

2. The house of Joseph bestirred themselves a little to get possession of Beth-el, *ver. 22.* That city is mentioned in the tribe of Benjamin, *Josh. xviii. 23.* Yet it is spoken of there, *ver. 13.* as a city in the borders of that tribe, and it should seem the line went through it, so that one half of it only belonged to Benjamin, the other half to Ephraim; and perhaps the activity of the Ephraimites at this time, to recover it from the Canaanites, secured it entirely to them from henceforward, or at least the greatest part of it, for afterwards we find it so much under the power of the ten tribes, (and Benjamin was none of them) that Jeroboam set up one of his calves in it. In this account of the expedition of the Ephraimites against Beth-el, observe, 1. Their interest in the divine favour. *The Lord was with them,* and would have been with the other tribes, if they would have exerted their strength. The Chaldee reads it here as in many other places. *The Word of the Lord was their helper, &c.* Christ himself, the captain of the Lord's hosts, now they acted separately, as well as when they were all in one body. 2. The prudent measure they took to gain the city. They sent spies to observe what part of the city was weakest, or which way they might make their attack with most advantage, *ver. 23.* These spies got very good information from a man they providentially light on, who shewed them a private way into the town, which was therefore left unguarded, because being not generally known, no danger was suspected on that side: and here, (1.) He is not to be blamed for giving them this intelligence, if he

did it from a conviction that *the Lord was with them,* and that by his donation the land was theirs of right, no more than Rahab was for entertaining those whom she knew to be enemies of her country, but friends of God. Nor, (2.) Are they to be blamed who *shewed him mercy,* gave him and his family not only their lives, but liberty to go wherever they please: For one good turn requires another. But it seems he would not join himself to the people of Israel, he feared them rather than loved them, and therefore he removed after a colony of the Hittites, which it should seem was gone into Arabia, and settled there upon Joshua's invasion of the country; with them this man chose to dwell, and among them he built a city, a small one, we may suppose, such as planters use to build, and in the name of it preserved the ancient name of his native city, Luz, an almond-tree, preferring that before its new name which carried religion in it, Beth-el, the house of God. 3. Their success; The spies brought or sent notice of the intelligence they had gained to the army, which improved their advantages, surprized the city, and put them all to the sword, *ver. 25.*

But besides this achievement, it seems the children of Joseph did nothing remarkable. (1.) Manasseh failed to drive out the Canaanites from several very considerable cities in their lot, and did not make any attempt upon them, *ver. 27.* But the Canaanites being in possession, were resolved not to quit it, they would dwell in that land, that Manasseh had not resolution enough to offer to dispossess them; as if there were no meddling with them, unless they were willing to resign, which it was not to be expected they ever would be. Only as Israel got strength they got ground, and served themselves, both by their contributions, and by their personal services, *ver. 28—33.* (2.) Ephraim likewise, though a powerful tribe, neglected Gezer, a considerable city, and suffered the Canaanites to dwell among them, *ver. 29.* which, some think, intimates their allowing them a quiet settlement, and indulging them with the privileges of an unconquered people, not so much as making them tributaries.

3. Zebulun, perhaps inclining to the sea-trade, for it was foretold that it should be a haven of ships, neglected to reduce Kitron and Nahalol, *ver. 30.* and only made the inhabitants of those places tributaries to them.

4. Asher quitted itself worse than any of the tribes, *ver. 31, 32.* not only in leaving more towns than any other of them in the hands of the Canaanites, but in submitting to the Canaanites instead of making them tributaries; for so the manner of expression intimates, that the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, as if the Canaanites were the more numerous, and the more powerful, would still be the lords of the country, and the Israelites must be only upon sufferance among them.

5. Naphtali also permitted the Canaanites to live among them, *ver. 33.* only by degrees they got them so far under as to exact contributions from them.

6. Dan was so far from extending his conquests there where his lot lay, that wanting spirit to make head against the Amorites, he was forced by them to retire into the mountain, and inhabit the cities there, but durst not venture into the valley, where it is probable the chariots of iron were, *ver. 34.* Nay, and some of the cities in the mountain were kept against them, *ver. 35.* Thus were they straitened in their possessions, and forced to seek for more room at Laish, a great way off, *chap. xviii. 1, &c.* In Jacob's blessing, Judah is compared to a lion, Dan to a serpent; now observe, how Judah with his lion-like courage prospered and prevailed, but Dan with all his serpentine subtilty could get no ground; craft and artful management doth not always effect the wonders it pretends to. What Dan came short of doing, it seems his neighbours the Ephraimites in part did for him; they put the Amorites under tribute, *ver. 35.*

Upon the whole matter, it appears that the people of Israel were generally very careless, both of their duty and interest in this thing; they did not what they might have done to expel the Canaanites and make room for themselves. And, 1. It was owing to their slothfulness and cowardice, they would not be at the pains to complete their conquests; like the sluggard, that dreamed of a lion in the way, a lion in the streets, they fancied insuperable difficulties, and frightened themselves with winds and clouds from sowing and reaping. 2. It was owing to their covetousness; the Canaanites labour and money would do them more good (they thought) than their blood, and therefore they were willing to let them live among them, that they might make a hand of them. 3. They had not that dread and detestation of idolatry which they ought to have had, thought it pity to put these Canaanites to the sword, though the measure of their iniquity was full; thought it would be no harm to let them live among them, and that they should be in no danger from them. 4. The same thing that kept their fathers forty years out of Canaan, kept them now out of the full possession of it, and that was unbelief. Distrust of the power and promise of God lost them their advantages, and run them into a thousand mischiefs.

C H A P. II.

In this chapter, we have, 1. A particular message which God sent to Israel by an angel, and the impression it made upon them, *ver. 1—5.* 2. A general idea of the state of Israel during the government of the judges. In which observe, (1.) Their adherence to God while Joshua and the elders lived, *ver. 6—10.* (2.) Their revolt afterwards to idolatry, *ver. 11—13.* (3.) God's displeasure against them, and his judgments upon them for it. (4.) His pity towards them, shewed in raising them up deliverers, *ver. 16—18.* (5.) Their relapse into idolatry after the judgment was over, *ver. 17—19.* (6.) The full stop God in anger put to their successes, *ver. 20—23.* These are the contents, not only of this chapter, but of the whole book.

1. AND an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. 2. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land, you shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: Why have ye done this! 3. Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you: but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. 4. And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lift up their voice and wept. 5. And they called the name of that place

place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.

It was the privilege of Israel, that they had not only a law in general sent them from heaven, once for all, to direct them into, and keep them in the way to happiness, but that they had particular messages sent them from heaven, as there was occasion, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, when at any time they turned aside out of that way. Besides the written word they had before them to read, they often heard a word behind them, saying, *This is the way*. Isa. xxx. 21. Here begins that way of God's dealing with them. When they would not hear Moses, let it be tried whether they will hear the prophets. In these verses we have a very awakening sermon that was preached to them when they began to cool in their religion.

1. The preacher was an *angel of the Lord*, ver. 1. not a prophet; not Phineas, as the Jews conceit; gospel ministers are indeed called angels of the Churches, but the Old Testament prophets are never called angels of the Lord; no doubt this was a messenger from heaven. Such extraordinary messengers we sometimes find in this book, employed in the raising up of the Judges that delivered Israel, as Gideon and Samson, and now to shew how various the good offices are they do for God's Israel, here is one sent to preach to them, to prevent their falling into sin and trouble. This extraordinary messenger was sent to command, if possible, the greater regard to the message, and to affect the minds of a people, whom nothing seemed to affect but what was sensible. The learned Bishop Patrick is clearly of opinion, that this was not a created angel, but the angel of the covenant; the same that appeared to Joshua, as *captain of the hosts of the Lord*, who was God himself. Christ himself, saith Dr. Lightfoot; who but God and Christ could say, *I made you go up out of Egypt*? Joshua had lately admonished them to take heed of entangling themselves with the Canaanites, but they regarded not the words of a dying man; the same warning therefore is here brought them by the living God himself, the Son of God appearing as an angel. If they slight his servants, surely they will reverence his son. This angel of the Lord is said to come up from Gilgal, perhaps not walking on earth, but flying swiftly, as the angel Gabriel did to Daniel, in the open firmament of heaven; but whether walking or flying he seemed to come from towards Gilgal, for a particular reason: Gilgal was long their head quarters after they came into Canaan, many signal favours they had there received from God, and there the covenant of circumcision was renewed, *Micah vi. 5.* of all which it was designed they should be minded by his coming from Gilgal. The remembrance of what we have received and heard, will prepare us for a warning to hold fast, *Rev. iii. 2, 3.*

2. The persons to whom this sermon was preached, were *all the children of Israel*, ver. 4. A great congregation for so great a preacher! They were assembled either for war, each tribe sending in its forces for some great expedition, or rather for worship, and then the place of their meeting must be Shiloh, where the tabernacle was, at which they were all to come together three times a year. When we attend upon God in instituted ordinances, we may expect to hear from him, and to receive his gifts at his own gates. The place is called Bochim, ver. 1. because it gained that name upon this occasion. All Israel needed the reproof and warning here given, and therefore it is spoken to them all.

3. The sermon itself is short but very close. God here tells them plainly, (1.) What he had done for them, ver. 1. He had brought them out of Egypt, a land of slavery and toil, into Canaan, a land of rest, liberty and plenty. The miseries of the one served as a foil to the felicities of the other. God had herein been kind to them, true to the oath sworn to their fathers, had given such proofs of his power, as left them inexcusable if they distrusted it, and such engagements to his service, as left them inexcusable if they deserted it. (2.) What he had promised to them. *I said, I will never break my covenant with you.* When he took them to be his peculiar people, it was not with any design to cast them off again, or to change them for another people at his pleasure; let them but be faithful to him, and they should find him unchangeably constant to them. He told them plainly the covenant he entered into with them should never break, unless it broke on their side. (3.) What were his just and reasonable expectations from them, ver. 2. That being taken into covenant with God, they should make no league with the Canaanites, who were both his enemies and theirs. That having set up his altar, they should throw down their altars, lest they should be a temptation to them to serve their gods. Could any thing be demanded more easy? (4.) How they had in this very thing which he had most insisted on, disobeyed him. But ye have not in so small a matter obeyed my voice. In contempt of their covenant with God, and their confederacy with each other in that covenant, they made leagues of friendship with the idolatrous devoted Canaanites, and connived at their altars, though they stood in competition with God's: *Why have ye done this?* What account can you give of this perverseness of yours at the bar of right reason? What apology can you make for yourselves, or what excuse can you offer? They that throw off their communion with God, and have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, know not what they do now, and will have nothing to say for themselves in the day of account shortly. (5.) How they must expect to smart by and for this their folly, ver. 3. Their tolerating the Canaanites among them would, (1.) Put a period to their victories; you will not drive them out, saith God, and therefore I will not; thus their sin was made their punishment. Thus they who indulge their lusts and corruptions, which they should mortify, forfeit the grace of God, and it is justly withdrawn from them. If we will not resist the devil, we cannot expect that God should tread him under our feet. (2.) It would involve them in continual troubles. They shall be thorns in your sides to gore you, which way soever you turn, always doing you one mischief or other. Those deceive themselves who expect advantage by friendship with those that are enemies to God. (3.) It would (which was worst of all) expose them to constant temptation, and draw them to sin. Their gods (their abominations, so the Chaldee) will be a snare to you, you will find yourselves wretchedly entangled in an affection to them, and it will be your ruin, so some read it. Those that approach sin, are justly left to themselves to fall into sin, and to perish in it. God often makes men's sin their punishment, and thorns and snares are in the way of the froward, who will walk contrary to God.

4. The good success of this sermon is very remarkable, the people *lift up their voice and wept*, ver. 4. (1.) The angel had told them of their sins, which they thus expressed their sorrow for, they lift up their voice in the confession of sin, crying out against their own folly and ingratitude, and wept as those that were both ashamed of themselves and angry at themselves as having acted so directly contrary both to their reason and to their interest. (2.) The angel had threatened them with the judgments of God which they thus expressed their dread of; they lift up their voices in prayer to God to turn away his wrath from them, and wept for fear of that wrath. They relented upon this alarm, and their hearts melted within them and trembled at the word, and not without cause. This was good, and a sign that the word they heard made an impression upon them; it is a wonder sinners can ever read their bibles with dry eyes; but this was not enough they

wept, but we do not find that they reformed, that they went home and destroyed all the remains of idolatry and idolaters among them. Many are melted under the word, that harden again, before they are cast into a new mould. However this general weeping, (1.) Gave a new name to the place, ver. 5. they called it *Bochim*, *Weepers*, a good name for our religious assemblies to answer. Had they kept close to God and their duty, no voice but that of singing had been heard in their congregation, but by their sin and folly they had made other work for themselves, and now nothing is to be heard but the voice of weeping. (2.) It gave occasion for a solemn sacrifice, they *sacrificed there unto the Lord*; being (as is supposed) met at Shiloh where God's altar was, they offered sacrifice to turn away God's wrath, and to obtain his favour, and in token of their dedication of themselves to him, and to him only, making a covenant by this sacrifice. The disease being thus taken in time, and the physic administered working so well, one would have hoped a cure might have been effected. But by the sequel of the story, it appears to have been too deeply rooted to be wept out.

6. ¶ And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land. 7. And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel. 8. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old: 9. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north-side of the hill Gaash. 10. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. 11. ¶ And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: 12. And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger. 13. And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. 14. ¶ And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. 15. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed. 16. ¶ Nevertheless, the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. 17. And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD: but they did not so. 18. And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings (by reason of them that oppressed them, and vexed them.) 19. And it came to pass; when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them: they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way. 20. ¶ And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel: and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice: 21. I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them, of the nations which Joshua left, when he died: 22. That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not. 23. Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily, neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.

The beginning of this paragraph is only a repetition of that account we had before of the people's good character, during the government of Joshua, and of his death and burial, *Josh. xxiv. 29.* Which comes in here again only to make way for the following account, which this chapter gives of their degeneracy and apostasy. The angel had foretold that the Canaanites and their idols would be a snare to Israel, now the historian undertakes to shew that they were so, and that that may appear the more clear, he looks back a little, and takes notice, (1.) Of their happy settlement in the land of Canaan. Joshua having distributed this land among them, dismissed them to the quiet and comfortable possession of it, ver. 6. *He sent them away*, not only every tribe, but every man to his inheritance, no doubt, giving them his blessing. (2.) Of their continuance in the faith and fear of God's holy name as long as Joshua lived, ver. 7. As they went to their possessions with good resolutions to cleave to God, so they persisted for some time in these good resolutions; as long as they had good rulers that set them good examples, gave them good instructions, and reprov'd and restrained the corruptions that crept in among them; and as long as they had fresh in remembrance the great things God did for them when he brought them into Canaan: they had seen those wonders, had so much sense as to believe their own eyes, and so much reason as to serve that God who had appeared so gloriously on their behalf; but they that followed, because they had not

seen, believed not. (3.) Of the death and burial of Joshua, which gave a fatal stroke to the interests of religion among that people, ver. 8, 9. Yet so much sense they had of their obligations to him, that they did him honour at his death, buried him in Timnath-heres; so it is called here, not as in Joshua, Timnath-serah. Heres signifies the sun; a representation of which some think was set upon his sepulchre, and gave name to it, in remembrance of the sun standing still at his word. So divers of the Jewish writers say; but I much question whether an image of the sun would be allowed to the honour of Joshua, at that time, when by reason of men's general proneness to worship the sun, it would be in danger of being abused to the dishonour of God. (4.) Of the rising up of a new generation, ver. 13. All that generation in a few years wore off, their good examples and instructions died and were buried with them, and there arose another generation of Israelites who had so little sense of religion, and were in so little care about it, that notwithstanding all the advantages of their education, one might truly say, that they knew not the Lord, knew him not aright, knew him not as he had revealed himself, else they would not have forsaken him. They were so intirely devoted to the world, so intent upon the business of it, or so indulgent of the flesh in ease and luxury, that they never minded the true God and his holy religion, and so were easily drawn aside to false gods and their abominable superstitions.

And so he comes to give us a general idea of the series of things in Israel during the time of the judges; the same repeated in the same order.

1. The people of Israel forsook the God of Israel, and gave that worship and honour to the dunghill deities of the Canaanites which was due to him alone. *Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and wonder, O earth! Hath a nation, such a nation, so well fed, so well taught, changed its God, such a God, a God of infinite power, unspotted purity, inexhaustible goodness, and so very jealous of a competitor, for stocks and stones that could do neither good nor evil? Jer. ii. 11, 12.* Never was there such an instance of folly, ingratitude and perfidiousness. Observe how it is described here, ver. 11, 12, 13. In general they did evil, nothing could be more evil, that is, more provoking to God, nor more prejudicial to themselves; and it was in the sight of the Lord; all evil is before him, but he takes special notice of the sin of *having any other god*. In particular, 1. *They forsook the Lord*, ver. 12. and again, ver. 13. This was one of the two great evils they were guilty of, *Jer. ii. 13.* They had been joined to the Lord in covenant but now they *forsook him*, as a wife *treacherously departeth from her husband*. They forsook the worship of the Lord, for the Chaldees; for they that forsake the worship of God, do in effect forsake God himself. It aggravated this, that he was the God of their fathers, so that they were *born in his house*, and therefore bound to serve him; and that he *brought them out of the land of Egypt, he loosed their bonds*, and upon that account also they were obliged to serve him. 2. When they forsook the only true God they did not turn atheists, nor was they such fools as to say, there is no God; but they followed other gods; so much remained of pure nature as to own a God, yet so much appeared of corrupt nature as to multiply gods, and to take up with any, and to follow the fashion, not the rule, in religious worship, Israel had the honour of being a peculiar people, and dignified above all others, and yet so false were they to their own privileges, that they were fond of the gods of the people that were round about them. Baal and Ashtaroth, he-gods and she-gods, they made their court to sun and moon, Jupiter and Juno. Baalim signifies lords, and Ashtaroth blessed ones; both plural: for when they forsook Jehovah, who is one, they had gods many, and lords many, as luxuriant fancy pleased to multiply them. Whatever they took for their gods, they served them, and begged favours from them.

2. The God of Israel was hereby provoked to anger, and delivered them up into the hands of their enemies, ver. 14, 15. He was wroth with them, for he is a jealous God, and true to the honour of his own name, and the way he took to punish them for their apostasy, was to make those their tormentors whom they yielded to as their tempters. They made themselves as mean and miserable by forsaking God, as they would have been great and happy if they had continued faithful to him. (1.) The scale of victory turned against them. After they forsook God, whenever they took the sword in hand, they were as sure to be beaten as before they had been sure to conquer. Formerly their enemies could not stand before them, but wherever they went, the hand of the Lord was for them; when they began to cool in their religion, God suspended his favour, and stopped the progress of their successes, would not drive out their enemies any more, ver. 2. only suffered them to keep their ground; but now when they were quite revolted to idolatry, the war turned directly against them, and they *could not stand any longer before their enemies*. God would rather give the success to those that had never known or owned him, than to those that had, but had now deserted him. Wherever they went they might perceive that God himself was turned to be their enemy, and fought against them, Isa. lxiii. 10. (2.) The balance of power then turned against them of course. Whoever would might spoil them; whoever would might oppress them; God sold them into the hands of their enemies; not only he delivered them up freely as we do that which we have sold, but he did it upon a valuable consideration that he might get himself honour as a jealous God, who would not spare even his own peculiar people when they provoked him. He sold them as insolvent debtors are sold, Matt. xviii. 25. by their sufferings to make some sort of reparation to his glory for the injury it sustained by their apostasy. Observe how their punishment, (1.) Answered what they had done, they served the gods of the nations, that were round about them, even the meanest, and God made them serve the princes of the nations that were round about them, even the meanest. He that is company for every fool, is justly made a fool of by every company. (2.) How it answered what God had spoken. The hand of heaven was thus turned against them, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn, ver. 15. referring to the curse and death set before them in the covenant, with the blessing and life. Those that have found God true to his promises, may from hence infer that he will be as true to his threatenings.

3. The God of infinite mercy took pity on them in their distresses, though they had brought themselves into them by their own sin and folly, and wrought deliverance for them. Nevertheless, though the trouble was the punishment of their sin, and the accomplishment of God's word, yet they were in process of time saved out of their troubles, ver. 16—18. Where observe, 1. The inducement of their deliverance. It came purely from God's pity and tender compassion, the reason was fetched from within himself. It is not said, it repented them because of their iniquities, (for it appears, ver. 17. that many of them continued unreformed) but it repented the Lord because of their groanings, though it is not so much the burden of sin, as the burden of affliction that they are said to groan under. It was true they deserved to perish for ever under his curse, yet this being the day of his patience and our probation, he doth not stir up all his wrath. He might in justice have abandoned them, but he could not for pity do it. 2. The instruments of their deliverance; God did not send angels from heaven to do it, or bring in any foreign power for their rescue, but raised up Judges from among themselves, as there was occasion, men to whom God gave extraordinary qualifications for, and calls to, that special service for which

they were designed, which was to reform and deliver Israel: and whose great attempts he crowned with wonderful success: *the Lord was with the Judges* when he raised them up, and so they became saviours. Observe, (1.) In the day of the greatest degeneracy and distress of the Church, there shall be some whom God will either find or make fit to redress its grievances, and set things to rights. (2.) God must be acknowledged in the seasonable raising up of useful men for public service. He spirits men with wisdom and courage, gives them hearts to act and venture. All that are in any way the blessings of their country, must be looked upon as the gift of God. (3.) Whom God calls he will own, and give them his presence, whom he raiseth up he will be with. (1.) The judges of a land are its saviours.

4. This degenerate people were not effectually and thoroughly reformed, no not by their judges, ver. 17—19. (1.) Even while their judges were with them, and active in the work of reformation, there were those that would not hearken to their judges but at the very time went a whoring after other gods; so mad were they upon their idol, and so obstinately bent to backslide. They had been espoused to God, but broke the marriage covenant, and went a whoring after false gods. Idolatry is spiritual adultery; so vile and base and perfidious a thing is it; and so hardly are those reclaimed that are addicted to it. (3.) Those that in the times of reformation began to amend, yet turned quickly out of the way again, and became as bad as ever. The way they turned out of was that which their godly ancestors walked in, and set them out in; but they soon started from under the influence both of their fathers good example of their own good education. The wicked children of godly parents do so, and will therefore have a great deal to answer for. (3.) However, when the judge was dead, they looked upon the dam which checked the stream of their idolatry as removed, and then it flowed down again with so much the more fury, and the next age seemed to be rather the worse for the attempts that were made towards their reformation, ver. 19. *They corrupted themselves more than their fathers*; strove to out-do them in multiplying strange gods, and inventing profane and impious rites of worship, as it were in contradiction to their reformers. They ceased not, or as the word is, they would not let fall any of their own doing; grew not ashamed of those idolatrous services that were most odious, nor weary of those that were most barbarous, would not so much as diminish one step of their hard and stubborn way. Thus they that have forsaken the good ways of God, which they have once known and professed, commonly grew most daring and desperate in sin, and have their hearts most hardened.

5. God's just resolution hereupon was, still to continue the rod over them. (1.) Their sin was sparing the Canaanites; and this in contempt and violation of the covenant God had made with them, and the commands he had given them, ver. 20. (2.) Their punishment was that the Canaanites were spared, and so they were beaten with their own rod. They were not all delivered into the hand of Joshua while he lived, ver. 23. Our Lord Jesus, though he spoiled the principalities and powers, yet did not complete his victory at first, *we see not yet all things put under him*; there are remains of Satan's interest in the Church, as there were of the Canaanites in the land; but our Joshua lives for ever, and will in the great day perfect his conquests. After Joshua's death little was done of a long time against the Canaanites: Israel had indulged them and grew familiar with them, and therefore God would not drive them out any more, ver. 21. If they will have such inmates as those among them let them take them, and see what will come of it. *God chose their delusions*, Isa. lxvi. 4. Thus men cherish and indulge their own corrupt appetites and passions, and instead of mortifying them make provision for them, and therefore God justly leaves them to themselves, under the power of their sins, which will be their ruin: *So shall their doom be, themselves have decided it*. These remnants of the Canaanites were left to prove Israel ver. 22. *whether they would keep the way of the Lord or no*; not that God might know them, but that they might know themselves. It was to try, 1. Whether they could resist the temptations to idolatry which the Canaanites would lay before them. God had told them they could not, Deut. vii. 4. But then thought they could; well saith God, I will try you; and upon trial it was found that the tempter's charms were quite too strong for them. God has told us how deceitful and desperately wicked our hearts are, but we are not willing to believe it, until by making bold with temptations we find it too true by sad experience. 2. Whether they would make a good use of the vexations which the remaining natives would give them, and the many troubles they would occasion them, and would thereby be convinced of sin and humbled for it, reformed, and driven to God and their duty; whether by continual alarms from them they would be kept in awe, and made afraid of provoking God.

C H A P. III.

In this chapter, 1. A general account of Israel's enemies is premised and of the mischief they did them, ver. 1—7. 2. A particular account of the brave exploits done by the three first of the judges. 1. Othniel, whom God raised up to fight Israel's battles, and pleaded their cause against the king of Mesopotamia, ver. 8—11. 2. Ehud who was employed in rescuing Israel out of the hands of the Moabites, and did it by stabbing the king of Moab, ver. 12—30. 3. Shamgar, who signalized himself in a encounter with the Philistines, ver. 31.

1. NOW these are the nations which the LORD left to prove Israel by them, (even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan; 2. Only that the generation of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof.) 3. Namely, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon, unto the entering in of Hamath. 4. And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. 5. And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites. 6. And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods. 7. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the

the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God and served Baalim and the groves.

We are here told what remained of the old inhabitants of Canaan. (1.) There were some of them that kept together in united bodies, unbroken, *ver. 3.* The five lords of the Philistines, viz. Ashdod, Gaza, Askelon, Gath, and Ekron, 1 Sam. vi. 17. Three of these cities had been in part reduced, *Judges i. 18.* but it seems the Philistines (probably with the help of the other two, which strengthened their confederacy with each other from thenceforward) recovered the possession of them. These gave the greatest disturbance to Israel of any of the natives, especially in the latter times of the Judges, and they were never quite reduced until David did it. There was a particular nation called Canaanites, that kept their ground with the Sidonians, upon the coast of the great sea. And in the north the Hivites held much of mount Lebanon, it being a remote corner, in which perhaps they were supported by some of the neighbouring states. But besides these (2.) There were every where in all parts of the country some scatterings of the nations, *ver. 5.* Hittites, Amorites, &c. which by Israel's foolish connivance and indulgence, were so many, so easy, and so insolent, that the children of Israel are said to dwell among them; as if the right had still remained in the Canaanites, and the Israelites had been taken in by their permission, and only as tenants at will.

Now concerning these remnants of the natives, observe,

1. How wisely God permitted them to remain. It had been mentioned in the close of the foregoing chapter, as an act of God's justice, that he let them remain for Israel's correction. But here another construction is put upon it, and it appears to have been an act of God's wisdom, that he let them remain for Israel's real advantage, that those who had not known the wars of Canaan might learn war, *ver. 1, 2.* It was the will of God that the people of Israel should be inured to war. (1.) Because their country was exceeding rich and fruitful, and abounded with dainties of all sorts, which, if they were not sometimes made to know hardship, would be in danger of sinking them into the utmost degree of luxury and effeminacy. They must sometimes wade in blood, and not always in milk and honey, lest even their men of war, by the long disuse of arms, should become as soft and nice as the tender and delicate woman, that would not set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy; a temper as destructive to every thing that is good, as it is to every thing that is great, and therefore to be carefully watched against by all God's Israel. (2.) Because their country lay very much in the midst of enemies by whom they must expect to be insulted, for God's heritage was as a speckled bird, the birds round about were against her, *Jer. xii. 9.* It was therefore necessary they should be well disciplined, that they might defend their coasts when invaded, and might hereafter enlarge their coast as God had promised them. The art of war is best learned by experience, which not only acquaints men with martial discipline, but (which is no less necessary) inspires them with a martial disposition. It was for the interest of Israel to breed soldiers, as it is the interest of an island to breed seamen; and therefore God left Canaanites among them, that, by the lesser difficulties and hardships they met with in encountering them, they might be prepared for greater; and by running with the footmen might learn to contend with horses, *Jer. xii. 5.* Israel was a figure of the church militant, that must fight its way to a triumphant state. The soldiers of Christ must endure hardness, 2 Tim. ii. 3. Corruption is therefore left remaining in the hearts even of good Christians, that they may learn war, may keep on the whole armour of God, and stand continually upon their guard. The learned Bishop Patrick offers another sense of *ver. 2.* that they might know to teach them war; that is, they shall know what it is to be left to themselves. Their fathers fought by a divine power; God taught their hands to war and their fingers to fight, but now they have forfeited his favour, let them learn what it is to fight like other men.

2. How wickedly Israel mingle themselves with those that did remain. One thing God intended in leaving them among them, was to prove Israel, *ver. 4.* that those who were faithful to the God of Israel might have the honour of resisting the Canaanites allurements to idolatry, and that those who were false and insincere might be discovered, and might fall under the shame of yielding to those allurements. Thus in the Christian Churches there must needs be heresies, that they which are perfect may be made manifest, 1 Cor. xi. 19. Israel upon trial proved ill. 1. They joined in marriage with the Canaanites, *ver. 6.* though they could not advance either their honour or their estate by marrying with them. They would mar their blood instead of mending it, and sink their estates instead of raising them by such marriages. 2. Thus they were brought to join in worship with them, they served their gods, *ver. 6.* Baalim and the groves, *ver. 7.* that is, the images that were worshipped in groves of thick trees, which were a sort of natural temples. In such unequal matches there is more reason to fear that the bad will corrupt the good, than to hope the good will reform the bad; as it is in laying two pears together, the one rotten and the other sound. When they inclined to worship other gods they forgot the Lord their God. In compliance to their new relations they talked of nothing but Baalim and the groves, so that by degrees they lost the remembrance of the true God; and forgot there was such a being, and what obligations they lay under to him. In nothing is the corrupt memory of man more treacherous than in this, it is apt to forget God; because out of sight he is out of mind; and here begins all the wickedness that is in the world; they have perverted their way, for they have forgotten the Lord their God.

8. ¶ Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years. 9. ¶ And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. 10. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war, and the LORD delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand: and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim. 11. And the land had rest forty years: and Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

We now come to the records of the government of the particular Judges, the first of which was Othniel, in whom the story of this book is knit to that of Joshua, for even in Joshua's time Othniel began to be famous; by which it appears that it was not long after Israel's settlement in Canaan before their purity began to be corrupted, and their peace in consequence dis-

turbed. And those who have taken pains to enquire into the sacred chronology are generally agreed, that the Danites idolatry, and the war with the Benjamites for abusing the Levite's concubine, though related in the latter end of this book, happened about this time, under or before Othniel's government, who though a judge was not such a king in Israel, as would keep men from doing what was right in their own eyes.

In this short narrative of Othniel's government, we have,

1. The distress that Israel was brought into for their sin, *ver. 8.* God was justly displeased with them, for plucking up the hedge of their peculiarity, and laying themselves in common with the nations, and plucked up the hedge of their protection, and laid them open to the nations; let them to sale as goods he would part with, and the first that laid hands on them was Chushan-rishathaim, king of that Syria which lay between the two great rivers of Tigris and Euphrates, thence called Mesopotamia, which signifies the midst of rivers. It is probable this was a warlike prince, and aiming to enlarge his dominions, invaded the two tribes first on the other side Jordan that lay next him, and afterwards perhaps by degrees penetrated into the heart of the country, and as far as he went put them under contribution, exacting it with rigour, and perhaps quartering soldiers upon them. Laban was of this country, who oppressed Jacob with a hard service, but it lay at such a distance, that one would not have thought Israel's trouble should have come from such a far country, which shews so much the more of the hand of God in it.

2. Their return to God in this distress. When he slew them, then they sought him whom before they had slighted. The children of Israel, even the generality of them, cried unto the Lord, *ver. 9.* At first they made light of their trouble, and thought they could easily shake off the yoke of a prince at such a distance, but when it continued eight years, they began to feel the smart of it, and then they cried under it who before laughed at it. They who in the day of their mirth had cried to Baalim and Ashtaroth, now they are in trouble cry to the Lord from whom they had revolted, whose justice brought them into this trouble, and whose power and favour could alone help them out of it. Affliction makes those cry to God with importunity, who before would scarce speak to him.

3. God's return in mercy to them for their deliverance. Though need drove them to him, he did not therefore reject their prayers, but graciously raised up a deliverer, or saviour, as the word is. Observe, 1. Who the deliverer was; it was Othniel, who married Caleb's daughter; one of the old stock, that had seen the works of the Lord, and had himself, no question, kept his integrity, and secretly lamented the apostacy of his people, but waited for a divine call to appear publicly for the redress of their grievances. He was now, we may suppose, far in years, when God raised him up to this honour; but the decays of age were no hindrance to his usefulness, when God had work for him to do. 2. Whence he had his compassion, not of man, or by man, but the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, *ver. 10.* The spirit of wisdom and courage to qualify him for the service, and a spirit of power to excite him to it, so as to give him and others full satisfaction that it was the will of God he should engage in it. The Chaldee faith, the spirit of prophecy remained on him. 3. What method he took; he first judged Israel, reproved them, called them to an account for their sins, and reformed them, and then went out to war; that was the right method. Let sin at home be conquered, that worst of enemies, and then enemies abroad will be the easier dealt with. Thus let Christ be our judge and law-giver, and then he will save us, and on no other terms, *Jhu. xxxiii. 22.* 4. What good success he had. He prevailed to break the yoke of the oppression, and it should seem to break the neck of the oppressor, for it is said the Lord delivered Chushan-rishathaim into his hand. Now was Judah, of which tribe Othniel was as a lion's whelp gone up from the prey. 5. The happy consequence of Othniel's good services. The land, though not getting ground, yet had rest, and some fruits of the reformation, forty years; and it had been perpetual if they had kept close to God and their duty.

12. ¶ And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD. 13. And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon, and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm-trees. 14. So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years. 15. But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite a man left-handed: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab. 16. But Ehud made him a dagger (which had two edges) of a cubit length, and he did gird it under his raiment, upon his right thigh. 17. And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon was a very fat man. 18. And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present. 19. But he himself turned again from the quarries that were by Gilgal, and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O king: who said, Keep silence. And all that stood by him, went out from him. 20. And Ehud came unto him, and he was sitting in a summer-parlour, which he had for himself alone, and Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of his seat. 21. And Ehud put forth his left hand and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly. 22. And the haft also went in after the blade: and the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly, and the dirt came out. 23. Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon him, and locked them. 24. When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw, that behold, the doors of the parlour were locked, they said, Surely he covereth his feet in his summer-chamber. 25. And they tarried till they were ashamed: and behold, he opened not the doors of the parlour: therefore they took a key and opened them: and behold, their lord

was

was fallen down dead on the earth. 26. And Ehud escaped while they tarried: and passed beyond the quarries, and escaped unto Seirath. 27. And it came to pass when he was come, that he blew a trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the mount, and he before them, 28. And he said unto them, Follow after me: for the LORD hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they went down after him, and took the fords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over. 29. ¶ And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all lusty, and all men of valour; and there escaped not a man. 30. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel: and the land had rest fourscore years.

Ehud is the next of the judges whose achievements are related in this history, and here is an account of his actions.

1. When Israel sins again, God raiseth up a new oppressor, *ver. 12, 13, 14.* It was an aggravation of their wickedness that they did evil again, after they had smarted so long for their former iniquities, promised so fair when Othniel judged them, and received so much mercy from God in their deliverance. What, and after all this again to break his commandments? Was the disease obstinate to all the methods of cure, both corrosive and lenitives? It seems it was. Perhaps they thought they might make the more bold with their old sins, because they saw themselves in no danger from their old oppressor, the powers of that kingdom were weakened and brought low; but God made them know that he had variety of rods wherewith to chastise them; *he strengthened Eglon king of Moab against them.* This oppressor lay nearer them than the former, and therefore would be the more unobscure to them; God's judgments thus approached them gradually, to bring them to repentance. When Israel dwelt in tents, but kept their integrity, Balak king of Moab that would have strengthened himself against them, was baffled; but now they had forsaken God, and worshipped the gods of the nations round about them, and perhaps those of the Moabites among the rest: here was another king of Moab whom God strengthened against them, put power into his hands, though a wicked man, that he might be a scourge to Israel; *the staff in his hand*, with which he beat Israel, was *God's indignation*, *hazbeit he meant not so, neither did his heart think so*, *Ila. x. 6, 7.* Israelites did ill, and we may suppose Moabites did worse, yet because God commonly punished the sins of his own people in this world, that the flesh being destroyed the spirit may be saved, Israel is weakened and Moab strengthened against them. God would not suffer the Israelites when they were the stronger to distress the Moabites, nor give them any disturbance though they were idolaters, *Deut. ii. 9.* yet now he suffered the Moabites to distress Israel, and strengthened them on purpose that they might: *Thy judgments, O God, are a great deep.* The king of Moab took to his assistance the Ammonites and Amalekites, *ver. 13.* and that strengthened him; and we are here told how they prevailed.

(1.) They beat them in the field, they went and smote Israel, *ver. 13.* not only those tribes that lay next them on the other side Jordan, who though first settled, being frontier tribes, were most disturbed, but those also within Jordan, for they made themselves masters of the city of palm-trees, which, it is probable, was a strong-hold erected near the place where Jericho had stood, for that was so called, *Deut. xxxiv. 3.* into which the Moabites put a garrison, to be a bridle upon Israel, and to secure the passes of Jordan, for the preservation of the communication with their own country. It was well for the Kenites that they had left this city, *chap. i. 16.* before it fell into the hands of the enemy. See how quickly the Israelites lost that by their own sin, which they had gained by miracles of divine mercy.

(2.) They made them to serve, *ver. 14. i. e.* exacted tribute from them, either the fruits of the earth in kind, or money in lieu of them. They neglected the service of God, and did not pay him his tribute; thus therefore did God recover from them that *wine and oil*, that silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal, *Hos. ii. 5.* What should have been paid to the divine grace, and was not, was distrained for, and paid to the divine justice. The former servitude, *ver. 8.* lasted but eight years, this eighteen; for it less troubles do not do the work, God will send greater.

2. When Israel prays again, God raiseth up a new deliverer, *ver. 15.* His name, Ehud. We are here told, (1.) It was a Benjamite. The city of palm-trees lay within the lot of this tribe, by which it is likely they suffered most, and therefore stirred first to shake off the yoke. It is supposed by the chronologers, that the Israelites war with Benjamin for the wickedness of Gibeah, by which that whole tribe was reduced to six hundred men, happened before this, so that we may well think that tribe to be now the weakest of all the tribes, yet out of it God raiseth up this deliverer, in token of his being perfectly reconciled to them, to manifest his own power in ordaining strength out of weakness, and that he might bestow *more abundant honour upon that part which lacked*, *1 Cor. xii. 24.* (2.) That he was left-handed, as it seems many of that tribe were, *chap. xx. 16.* Benjamin signifies the son of the right-hand, and yet multitudes of them were left-handed, for men's natures do not always answer their names. The LXX say, he was an ambi-dexter, one that could use both hands alike, supposing that was an advantage to him in the action he was called to; but the Hebrew phrase, that he was *shut of his right hand*, intimate, that either through disease or disuse he made little or no use of that, but of his left-hand only, and so was the less fit for war, because he must needs handle his sword but awkwardly; yet God chose this left-handed man to be the man of his right-hand, whom he would *make strong for himself*, *Psal. lxxx. 17.* It was *God's right-hand* that gained Israel the victory, *Psal. xlv. 3.* not the right-hand of the instruments he employed.

We are here told what Ehud did for the deliverance of Israel out of the hands of the Moabites. He saved the oppressed by destroying the oppressors, when the measure of their iniquity was full, and the set time to favour Israel was come.

1. He put to death Eglon the king of Moab; I say, put him to death, not he murdered or assassinated him: but as a judge or minister of divine justice, executed the judgments of God upon him, as an implacable enemy to God and Israel. The story is particularly related.

(1.) He had a fair occasion of access to him; being an ingenious active man, and fit to stand before kings, his people chose him to carry a present in the name of all Israel, over and above their tribute, to their great lord the king of Moab, that they might find favour in his eyes, *ver. 15.* The present is called *mincha* in the original, which is the word used in the law for the offerings that were presented to God, to obtain his favour; these the children of Israel had not offered in their season, to the God that

loved them, and now to punish them for their neglect, they are laid under a necessity of bringing their offering to a heathen prince that hated them. Ehud did his errand to Eglon, offered his present with the usual ceremony, and expressions of dutiful respect, the better to colour what he intended, and to prevent suspicion.

(2.) It should seem from the first he designed to be the death of him, God putting it into his heart, and letting him know also that the motion was from himself, by the spirit that came upon him, the impulses of which carried with them their own evidence, and so gave him full satisfaction both of the lawfulness and of the success of this daring attempt; of both which he had reason enough to doubt. If he be sure God bids him to do it, he is sure both that he may do it, and that he shall do it; for a command from God is sufficient to bear us out, and bring us off both against our consciences, and against all the world. That he compassed and imagined the death of this tyrant, appears by the preparation he made of a weapon for the purpose; a short dagger, but half a yard long, like a bayonet, which might easily be concealed under his cloaths, *ver. 16.* perhaps, because none were suffered to come near the king with their swords by their sides. This he wore on his right thigh, that it might be the readier to his left-hand, and might be the less suspected.

(3.) He contrived how to be alone with him; which he might the easier be now he had not only made himself known to him, but ingratiated himself by the present, and the compliments, which, perhaps on that occasion, he had passed upon him. Observe how he laid his plot. 1. He concealed his design even from his own attendants, brought them part of the way, and then ordered them to go forward towards home, while he himself, as if he had forgot something behind him, went back to the king of Moab's court, *ver. 18.* There needed but one hand to do the execution, had more been engaged they could not so safely have kept counsel, nor so easily have made an escape. 2. He returned from the quarries by Gilgal, *ver. 19.* from the graven images (so it is in the margin) which were with Gilgal; set up perhaps by the Moabites with the twelve stones which Joshua had set up there. Some suggest that the sight of the idols stirred up in him such an indignation against the king of Moab as put him upon the execution of that design, which otherwise he had thought to have let fall for the present. Or, perhaps he came so far as to these images, that telling from what place he returned, the king of Moab might be the more apt to believe he had a message from God. 3. He begged a private audience, and obtained it in a withdrawing room, here called a Summer-parlour. He told the king he had a secret errand to him, who thereupon ordered all his attendants to withdraw, *ver. 19.* Whether he expected to receive some private instructions from an oracle, or some private informations concerning the present state of Israel, as if Ehud would betray his country, it was a very unwise thing for him to be all alone with a stranger, and whom he had reason to look upon as an enemy; but those that are marked for ruin are insatuated, and their hearts hid from understanding, God deprives them of discretion.

(4.) When he had him alone he soon dispatched him. His Summer-parlour, where he used to indulge himself in ease and luxury, was the place of execution. (1.) Ehud demands his attention to a message from God, *ver. 20.* and that message was a dagger: God sends to us by the judgments of his hand, as well as by the judgments of his mouth. (2.) Eglon pays respect to a message from God. Though a king, though a heathen king, though rich and powerful, though now tyrannizing over the people of God; though a fat unwieldy man, that could not easily rise, nor stand long, though in private, and what he did not under observation, yet when he expected to receive orders from heaven, he rose out of his seat, whether it were low and easy, or whether it were high and stately, he quitted it, and stood up when God was about to speak to him, thereby owning God his superior. This shames the irreverence of many who are called Christians, and yet when a message from God is delivered to them, study to shew by all the marks of carelessness how little they regard it. Ehud, in calling what he had to do a message from God, plainly avouches a divine commission for it; and God's inclining Eglon to stand up to it, did both confirm the commission, and facilitates the execution. (3.) The message was delivered, not to his ear, but immediately, and literally to his heart, into which the fatal knife was thrust, and was left there, *ver. 21, 22.* His extreme fatness made him unable to resist, or to help himself; probably it was the effect of his luxury and excess, and when the fat closed up the blade, God would by that circumstance shew how those that pamper the body do but prepare for their own misery. However, it was an emblem of his carnal security and senselessness. His heart was as fat as grease, and in that he thought himself inclosed. See *Psal. cxix. 70—xvii. 10.* Eglon signifies a calf, and he fell like a fatted calf, by the knife, an acceptable sacrifice to divine justice. Notice is taken of the coming out of the dirt or dung, that the death of this proud tyrant may appear the more ignominious and shameful. He that had been so very nice and curious about his own body, to keep it easy and clean, shall now be found wallowing in his own blood and excrements. Thus doth God pour contempt upon princes. Now this fact of Ehud's, (1.) May justify itself, because he had special direction from God to do it, and it was agreeable to the usual method, which under that dispensation God took to avenge his people of their enemies, and to manifest to the world his own justice. But, (2.) It will by no means justify any now in doing the like. No such commissions are now given, and to pretend to them is to blaspheme God, and make him patronise the worst of villainies. Christ bid Peter sheathe the sword, and we find not that he bid him draw it again.

(3.) Providence wonderfully favoured his escape, when he had done the execution. (1.) The tyrant fell silently, without any shriek or out-cry, which might have been overheard by his servants at a distance. How silently doth he go down to the pit, choaked up it may be with his own fat, which stifled his dying groans, though he had made so great a noise in the world, and had been the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. (2.) The heroic executioner of this vengeance, with such a preference of mind, as discovered, not only no consciousness of guilt, but a mighty confidence in the divine protection, shut the doors after him, took the key with him, and passed through the guards with such an air of innocency, and boldness, and unconcernedness, as made them not at all to suspect his having done any thing amiss. (3.) The servants that attended in the anti-chamber, coming to the door of the inner parlour, when Ehud was gone, to know their master's pleasure, and finding it locked, and all quiet, they concluded he was lain down to sleep, had covered his feet upon his couch, and was gone to consult his pillow about the message he had received, and to dream upon it, *ver. 24.* and therefore would not offer to open the door. Thus by their care not to disturb his sleep, they lost the opportunity of revenging his death. See what comes of men's taking state too much, and obliging those about them to keep their distance, some time or other it may come against them more than they think of. (4.) The servants at length opened the door, and found their master had *slept indeed his long sleep*, *ver. 25.* The horror of this tragical spectacle, and the confusion it must needs put them into, to reflect upon their own inconsideration in not opening the door sooner, quite put by the thoughts of sending pursuivants after him that had

done it, whom now they despaired of overtaking. (5.) Ehud by this means made his escape to Seirah, a thick wood; so some, ver. 26. It is not said any where in this story, what was the place in which Eglon lived now, but there being no mention of Ehud's passing and repassing Jordan, I am inclined to think that Eglon had left his own country of Moab, on the other side Jordan, and made his principal residence at this time in the city of palm-trees, within the land of Canaan, a satter country than his own, and that there he was slain, and the quarters of Gilgal were not far off him. There where he had settled himself, and thought he had sufficiently fortified himself to lord it over the people of God, there he was cut off, and proved to be fed for the slaughter, like a lamb in a large place.

2. Ehud having slain the king of Moab, gave a total rout to the forces of the Moabites, that were among them, and so effectually shook off the yoke of their oppression. (1.) He raised an army presently in mount Ephraim, at some distance from the head-quarters of the Moabites, and headed them himself, ver. 27. The trumpet he blew was indeed a jubilee trumpet, proclaiming liberty, and a joyful sound it was to the oppressed Israelites, who for a long time had heard no other trumpets but those of their enemies, (2.) Like a pious man, and as one that did all this in faith, he took encouragement himself, and gave encouragement to his soldiers from the power of God engaged for them, ver. 28. *Follow me, for the Lord hath delivered your enemies into your hands*: we are sure to have God with us, and therefore go on boldly, and shall go on triumphantly. (3.) Like a politic general, he secured the fords of Jordan, set strong guards upon all those passes to cut off the communication between the Moabites that were in the land of Israel (for upon them only his design was) and their own country on the other side Jordan; that if upon an alarm given them they resolved to fly, they might not escape thither, and if they resolved to fight they might not have assistance thence. Thus he shut them up in that land as their prison, in which they were pleasing themselves as their palace and paradise. (4.) He then fell upon them, and put them all to the sword, ten thousand of them, which it seems was the number appointed to keep Israel in subjection, ver. 29. *There escaped not a man* of them. And they were the best and choicest of all the king of Moab's forces, all lusty men, men of bulk and stature, and not only able bodied, but great spirited too, and men of valour, ver. 22. But neither their strength nor their courage stood them in any stead when the set time was come for God to deliver them into the hand of Israel. (5.) The consequences of this victory was, that the power of the Moabites was wholly broken in the land of Israel, the country was cleared of these oppressors, and the land had rest eighty years, ver. 30. We may hope that there was likewise a reformation among them, and a check given to idolatry, by the influence of Ehud, which continued a good part of this time. It was a great while for the land to rest, fourscore years; yet what is that to the saints everlasting rest in the heavenly Canaan?

31. ¶ And after him was Shamgar, the son of Anath, which slew the Philistines six hundred men with an ox-goad, and he also delivered Israel.

When it was said the land had rest eighty years, some think it is meant chiefly of that part of the land which lay eastward on the banks of Jordan, which had been oppressed by the Moabites; but it seems by this passage here, that the other side of the country which lay south-west, was in that time infested by the Philistines, against whom Shamgar made head.

1. It seems Israel needed deliverance, for he delivered Israel; how great the distress was Deborah afterwards related in her song. chap. v. 6. that in the days of Shamgar the highways were unoccupied, &c. that part of the country which lay next to the Philistines, were so infested with their rapparees, that people could not travel the roads in safety, but were in danger of being set upon and robbed, nor durst they dwell in the unguarded villages, but were forced to take shelter in the fortified cities.

2. God raised him up to deliver them, as it should seem, while Ehud was yet living, but superannuated. So inconsiderable were the enemies for number, that, it seems, the killing of six hundred of them amounted to a deliverance of Israel, and so many he slew with an ox goad; or, as some read it a plough-share. It is probable, he was himself following the plough when the Philistines made an inroad upon the country to ravage it, and God put it into his heart to oppose them; the impulse being sudden and strong, and having neither sword nor spear to do execution with, he took the instrument that was next at hand, some of the tools of his plough, and with that killed so many hundred men, and came off unhurt. See here, 1. That God can make those eminently serviceable to his glory and to his Church's good, whose extraction, education and employment, is very mean and obscure. He that has the residue of the Spirit, could, when he pleased, make ploughmen judges and generals, and fishermen apostles. 2. It is no matter how weak the weapon is, if God direct and strengthen the arm. An ox-goad, when God pleaseth, shall do more than Goliath's sword. And sometimes he chooseth to work by such unlikely means, that the excellency of the power may appear to be of God.

C H A P. IV.

The method in the history of Deborah and Barak, the heroes in this chapter, is the same with that before. Here is, (1.) Israel revolted from God, ver. 1. (2.) Israel oppressed by Jabin, ver. 2, 3. (3.) Israel judged by Deborah, ver. 4, 5. (4.) Israel rescued out of the hands of Jabin. (1.) Their deliverance is concerted between Deborah and Barak, ver. 6—9. (2.) It is accomplished by their joint agency. Barak takes the field, ver. 10. Sisera, Jabin's general, meets him, ver. 12, 13. Deborah encourageth him, ver. 14. And God gives him a complete victory. The army routed, ver. 15, 16. The general forced to flee, ver. 17. And there where he expected shelter, had his life stolen from him by Jael while he was asleep, ver. 18—21. which completes Barak's triumph, ver. 22, and Israel's deliverance, ver. 23, 24.

1. **A**ND the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead. 2. And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles. 3. And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.

No. XXXVI.

Here is, 1. Israel backsliding from God, they again did evil in his sight, forsook his service, and worshiped idols, for that was the sin which did now most easily beset them, ver. 1. See in this, (1.) The strange strength of corruption which hurries men into sin, notwithstanding the most frequent instances of its fatal consequences. The bent to backslide is very hardly restrained. (2.) The common ill effects of a long peace. The land had rest eighty years, which should have confirmed them in their religion, but, on the contrary, it made them secure and wanton, and indulgent of those lusts which the worship of the false gods was calculated for the gratification of. Thus the prosperity of fools destroys them. *Jeshurun waxeth fat and kicketh.* (3.) The great loss which a people sustains by the death of good governors: They did evil because Ehud was dead. So it may be read. He kept a strict eye upon them, restrained and punished every thing that looked towards idolatry, and kept them close to God's service. But when he was gone they revolted, fearing him more than God.

2. Israel oppressed by their enemies. When they forsook God, he forsook them, and then they became an easy prey to every spoiler. They alienated themselves from God, as if he were none of theirs, and then God alienated them as none of his; they that threw themselves out of God's service, threw themselves out of his protection; *What has my beloved to do in my house*, when she has thus played the harlot? *Jer. xi. 15.* He sold them into the hands of Jabin, ver. 2. This Jabin reigned in Hazor, as another of the same name, and perhaps his ancestor, had done before him, whom Joshua routed, slew and burnt his city, *Joshua xi. 1—10.* But it seems in process of time the city was rebuilt, the power regained, the loss retrieved, and by degrees the king of Hazor becomes able to tyrannize over Israel, who by sin had lost all their advantages against the Canaanites. This servitude was longer than either of the former, and much more grievous; Jabin and his general Sisera, did mightily oppress Israel. That which aggravated the oppression was, 1. That his enemy was nearer them than any of the former, in their borders, in their bowels, and by that means had the more opportunity to do them mischief. 2. That they were the natives of the country, who bore an implacable enmity to them for invading and dispossessing them, and when they had them in their power, would be so much the more cruel and mischievous towards them in revenge of the old quarrel. 3. That these Canaanites had, when time was, been conquered and subdued by Israel, were of old sentenced to be their servants, *Gen. 9. 25.* and might now have been under their feet, and utterly incapable of giving them any disturbance, if their own slothfulness, cowardice and unbelief, had not suffered them thus to get head. To be oppressed by those whom their fathers had conquered, and whom they themselves had foolishly spared, could not but be very grievous.

3. Israel returning to their God: they cried unto the Lord, when distress drove them to him, and they saw no other way of relief. Those that slight God in their prosperity, will find themselves under a necessity of seeking to him when they are in trouble.

4. ¶ And Deborah a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. 5. And she dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Beth-el in mount Ephraim; and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. 6. And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam, out of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying, Go, and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali, and of the children of Zebulun? 7. And I will draw unto thee, to the river Kishon Sisera the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots, and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand. 8. And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me then I will not go. 9. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding, the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour: for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.

The year of the redeemed is at length come, when Israel was to be delivered out of the hands of Jabin, and restored again to their liberty, which we may suppose the northern tribes, that lay nearest the oppressor, and felt most of the effects of his fury, did in a particular manner cry to God for. For the oppression of the poor, and the sighing of the needy, now will God arise. Now here we have,

1. The preparation of the people for their deliverance, by the prophetic conduct and government of Deborah, ver. 4, 5. Her name signifies a bee, and she answered her name by her industry, sagacity, and great usefulness to the public; her sweetness to her friends, and sharpness to her enemies. She is said to be the wife of Lapidoth, the termination not commonly found in the name of a man, therefore some make it the name of a place, she was a woman of Lapidoth. Others take it appellatively, Lapidoth signifies Lamps. The Rabbins say, she had employed herself in making wicks for the lamps of the tabernacle, and having stooped to that mean office for God, she was afterwards thus preferred. Or she was a woman of illuminations, or of splendours, one that was extraordinary knowing and wise, and so came to be very eminent and illustrious. Concerning her we are here told, (1.) That she was intimately acquainted with God, she was a prophetess, one that was instructed in divine knowledge by the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of God, and had gifts of wisdom, which she attained to, not in an ordinary way; she heard the word of God, and probably, saw the vision of the Almighty. (2.) That she was entirely devoted to the service of Israel. She judged Israel at the time that Jabin oppressed them; and perhaps, the being a woman, was the more easily permitted by the oppressor to do it. She judged, not as a princess, by any civil authority conferred upon her, but as a prophetess, and as God's mouth to them, correcting abuses and redressing grievances, especially those which related to the worship of God. The children of Israel came up to her from all parts to judgment, not so much for the deciding of controversies between man and man, as for advice in the reformation of what was amiss in things pertaining to God. Those among them, who before had secretly lamented the impieties and idolatries of their neighbours, but knew not where to apply themselves for the restraining of them, now made their complaints to Deborah, who by the sword of the Spirit shewing them the judgment of God, reduced and reclaimed many, and excited and animated the magistrates in their respective districts to put the laws in execution. It is said, she dwelt, or as some read.

read it, she sat under a palm-tree, called ever after from her the palm-tree of Deborah. Either she had her house under that tree; a mean habitation which would couch under a tree, or she had her judgment seat in the open air: under the shadow of that tree, which was an emblem of the justice she sat there to administer, which will thrive and grow against opposition, as palms under pressures. Josephus saith, that the children of Israel came to Deborah to desire her to pray to God for them, that they might be delivered out of the hand of Jabin; and Samuel is said at one particular time to judge Israel in Mizpeh, i. e. bring them back again to God, when they made the same address to him upon a like occasion, 1 Sam. vii. 6—8.

2. The project laid for their deliverance. When the children of Israel came to her for judgment, with her they found salvation; so they that seek to God for grace, shall have grace and peace, grace and comfort, grace and glory. She was not herself fit to command an army in person, being a woman, but she nominates one that was fit, Barak of Naphtali, who, it is probable, had already signalized himself in some encounters with the forces of the oppressor, living near him (for Hazor and Harosheth lay within the lot of that tribe) and thereby had gained a reputation and interest among his people. Some struggles we may suppose, that the brave man had used towards the shaking off the yoke, but could not effect it, till he had his commission and instructions from Deborah. He could do nothing without her head, nor she without his hands, but both together made a complete deliverer, and effected a complete deliverance. The greatest and best are not self-sufficient, but need one another.

1. By God's direction she orders Barak to raise an army and engage Jabin's forces, that were under Sisera's command, ver. 6, 7. Barak, it may be, had been meditating some great attempt against the common enemy, a spark of generous fire was glowing in his breast, and said he would do something to purpose for his people, and for the cities of his God. But two things discouraged him: (1.) He wanted a commission to levy forces; that therefore Deborah here gives him under the broad seal of heaven, which, as a prophetess, she had warrant to affix to it. *Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded it?* Yes certainly he has, take my word for it. Some think she intends this as an appeal to Barak's own heart, has not God by a secret whisper to thyself given thee some intimation of his purpose, to make use of thee as an instrument in his hand to serve Israel? Hast not thou felt some impulse of this kind upon thine own spirit? If so, the spirit of prophecy in Deborah confirms the spirit of a soldier in Barak, *Go, and draw towards mount Tabor.* She directs him what number of men to raise, ten thousand, and let him not fear that those will be too few, when God hath said, he will by them save Israel. Whence he should raise them, only out of his own tribe, and that of Zebulun next adjoining; these two countries should furnish him with an army sufficient, he need not stay to go farther. And lastly, She orders him where to make his rendezvous, at mount Tabor, in his own neighbourhood. (2.) When he had an army raised he knew not how he should have an opportunity of engaging the enemy, who, perhaps declined fighting, having heard that Israel, if they had but courage enough to make head against an enemy, seldom failed of success. Well, saith Deborah, in the name of God, *I will draw unto thee Sisera and his army.* She assures him that the matter should be determined by one pitched battle, and should not be long in the doing. 1. In mentioning the power of the enemy, Sisera, a celebrated general, bold and experienced, his chariots, his iron chariots, and his multitude of soldiers, she obliges Barak to fortify himself with the utmost degree of resolution, for the enemy he was to engage was a very formidable one; it is good to know the worst that we may provide accordingly. But, (2.) In fixing the very place to which Sisera would draw his army, she gave him a sign, which might help to confirm his faith when he came to engage. It was a contingent thing, and depended upon Sisera's own will, but when afterwards he should see that falling out just as Deborah had foretold, he might from thence infer, that certainly in the rest she said she spoke under a divine direction, which would be a great encouragement to him, especially because with this, 3. She gave him an express promise of success: *I will, i. e. (God will, in whose name I speak) deliver them into thy hand;* So that when he saw them drawn up against him, according to Deborah's word, he might be confident, that according to her word he should soon see them fallen before him. Observe, God draws them to him only that he might deliver them into his hand; when Sisera drew his forces together, he designed the destruction of Israel, but God gathered them as sheaves into the floor, for their own destruction, Micah iv. 11, 12. *Assemble yourselves and you shall be broken in pieces,* Isaiah viii. 9. See Rev. xix. 17, 18.

2. At Barak's request, she promiseth to go along with him to the field of battle. (2.) Barak insists much upon the necessity of her presence, which would be to him better than a council of war, ver. 8. *If thou wilt go with me to direct and advise me, and in every difficult case, to let me know God's mind, then I will go with all my heart, and not fear the chariots of iron, otherwise not.* Some make this to be the language of a weak faith, he could not take her word, unless he had her with him in pawn as it were for performance. It seems rather to rise from a conviction of the necessity of God's presence and continual conduct, a pledge and earnest of which he would reckon Deborah's presence to be, and therefore begged thus earnestly for it. *If thou go not up with me, in token of God's going with me, carry me not up hence.* Nothing would be a greater satisfaction to him, than to have the prophetess with him to animate his soldiers, and to be consulted as an oracle upon all occasions. (2.) Deborah promiseth to go with him, ver. 9. No toil nor peril shall discourage her from doing the utmost that becomes her to do for the service of her country. She would not send him where she would not go herself. Those that in God's name call others to their duty, should be very ready to assist them in it. Deborah was the weaker vessel, yet had the stronger faith. But though she agrees to go with Barak, if he insisted upon it, she gives him a hint proper enough to move a soldier not to insist upon it; *the journey thou undertakest (so confident was she of the success, that she calls his engaging in war but the undertaking of a journey) shall not be for thine honour, not so much for thine honour as if thou hadst gone by thyself, for the Lord shall sell Sisera (now his turn comes to be sold as Israel was, ver. 2. by way of reprisal) into the hand of a woman, i. e. 1. The world would ascribe the victory to the hand of Deborah; this he might himself foresee. 2. God (to correct his weakness) would complete the victory by the hand of Jael, which would be some eclipse to his glory. But Barak values the satisfaction of his mind, and the good success of his enterprise, more than his honour, and therefore will by no means drop his request. He dares not fight unless he have Deborah with him to direct him and pray for him; she therefore stood to her word with a masculine courage; this noble heroine arose and went with Barak.*

10. ¶ And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh, and he went up with ten thousand men at his feet: and Deborah went up with him. 11. Now Heber the Kenite, which was of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had severed himself from

the Kenites, and pitched his tents unto the plain of Zaanaim, which is by Kedesh. 12. And they shewed Sisera, that Barak the son of Abinoam was gone up to mount Tabor. 13. And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles, unto the river of Kishon. 14. And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: Is not the LORD gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him. 15. And the LORD discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword, before Barak: so that Sisera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet. 16. But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host unto Harosheth of the Gentiles, and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword, and there was not a man left.

Here, 1. Barak beats up for volunteers, and soon has his quota of men ready, ver. 10. Deborah had appointed him to raise an army of ten thousand men, ver. 6. and so many he has presently at his feet, following him and subject to his command. God is said to call us to his feet, Isa. xli. 2. i. e. into obedience to him. Some think it intimates that they were all footmen, and so the armies of the Jews generally were, which made the disproportion of strength between them, and the enemy (who had horses and chariots) very great, and the victory more illustrious: but the presence of God and his prophetess was abundantly sufficient to balance their disproportion. Barak has men at his feet, which intimates their cheerfulness and readiness to attend him *whithersoever he went*, Rev. xiv. 4. Though the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali were chiefly depended on, yet it appears by Deborah's song; that there were some come unto him from other tribes, Manasseh and Issachar, and more were expected that came not, from Reuben, Dan, and Asher, chap. v. 14—17. But these are overlooked here, and we are only told, that to make his ten thousand men effective indeed, *Deborah went up with him.* The eleventh verse concerning the remove of Heber, one of the families of the Kenites, out of the wilderness of Judah, in the south, where those families had fixed themselves, chap. i. 6. into the northern country, comes in for the sake of what was to follow concerning the exploit of Jael, a wife of that family.

2. Sisera upon notice of Barak's motion, takes the field with a very numerous and powerful army, ver. 12, 13. They shewed Sisera, i. e. it was shewed him. Yet some think it to refer to the Kenites, mentioned immediately before, ver. 11. They gave Sisera notice of Barak's rendezvous, there being peace at this time between Jabin and that family, ver. 17. Whether they intended it as a kindness to him or no, it served to accomplish what God had said by Deborah, ver. 17. *I will draw unto thee Sisera.* Sisera's confidence was chiefly in his chariots, therefore particular notice is taken of them, *nine hundred chariots of iron*, which, with the scythes fastened to their axle-trees, when they were driven into an army of footmen, did terrible execution. So ingenious have men been in inventing methods of destroying one another, to gratify those lusts from which came wars and fightings.

3. Deborah gives orders to engage the enemy, ver. 14. Josephus saith that when Barak saw Sisera's army drawn up, and attempting to surround the mountain, on the top of which he and his forces were encamped, his heart quite failed him, and he determined to retire to a place of greater safety; but Deborah animated him to make a descent upon Sisera, assuring him that this was the day marked out in the divine counsels for his defeat. Now they appear most threatening, they are ripe for ruin. The thing is as sure to be done as if it was done already, the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thy hand. See how the work and honour of this great action is divided between Deborah and Barak; she, as the head, gives the word, he, as the hand, doth the work. Thus doth God dispense his gifts variously, 1 Cor. xii. 4, &c. But though ordinary the head of the woman is the man, 1 Cor. xi. 2. here he that has the residue of the Spirit was pleased to cross hands, and to put the head upon the woman's shoulders, choosing the weak things of the world to shame the mighty, that no flesh might glory in his presence. It was well for Barak that he had Deborah with him, for she made up what was defective, (1.) In his conduct, by telling him *this is the day.* (2.) In his courage, by assuring him of God's presence, *Is not the Lord gone out before thee?* Darest thou not follow, when thou hast God himself for thy leader? Note, 1. In every undertaking it is good to be satisfied that God goes before us, that we are in the way of our duty, and under his direction. 2. If we have ground to hope that God goes before us, we ought to go on with courage and cheerfulness. Be not dismayed at the difficulties thou meetest with in resisting Satan, in serving God, or suffering for him, for *is not the Lord gone out before thee?* Follow him fully then.

4. God himself routs the enemy's army, ver. 15. Barak, in obedience to Deborah's orders, went down into the valley, though there upon the plain the iron chariots would have so much the more advantage against him, quitting his fastnesses upon the mountain in dependence upon the divine power: *for in vain is salvation hoped from hills and mountains, in the Lord alone is the salvation of his people*, Jer. iii. 23. And he was not deceived in his confidence, the Lord discomfited Sisera. It was not so much the bold and surprising alarm which Barak gave their camp, that dispirited and dispersed them, but God's terror seized their spirits, and put them into an unaccountable confusion. The stars it seems fought against them, chap. v. 20. Josephus saith, that a violent storm of hail which beat in their faces gave them this rout, disabled them, and drove them back, so that they became a very easy prey to the army of Israel, and Deborah's words were made good the Lord hath delivered them into thy hand, it is now in thy power to do what thou wilt with them.

5. Barak bravely improves his advantages, follows the blow with an undaunted resolution and an unwearied diligence, prosecutes the victory, and pursues the scattered forces, even to their general's head-quarters at Harosheth, ver. 16. and spares none whom God had delivered into his hand to be destroyed, *there was not a man left.* When God goes before us in our spiritual conflicts, we must bestir ourselves, and when by his grace he gives us some success against the enemies of our souls, we must improve it by watchfulness and resolution, and carry on the holy war with vigour.

17. Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite: for there was peace

peace between Jabin the king of Hazor, and the house of Heber the Kenite. 18. ¶ And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me, fear not: and when he had turned in unto her, into the tent, she covered him with a mantle. 19. And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink, for I am thirsty; and she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him. 20. Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be when any man doth come and enquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No. 21. Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: (for he was fast asleep, and weary) so he died. 22. And behold as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples. 23. So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan, before the children of Israel. 24. And the hand of the children of Israel prospered and prevailed against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

We have seen the army of the Canaanites totally routed. It is said, *Psal.* lxxxiii. 9, 10. (where the defeat of this army is pleaded as a precedent for God's doing the like in after-times) that they became as *dung for the earth*. Now here we have,

(1.) The fall of their general. Sisera, captain of the host, in whom, it is likely, Jabin their king put an entire confidence, and therefore was not himself present in the action. Let us trace the steps of this mighty man's fall.

1. He quitted his chariot, and took to his feet, *ver.* 15—17. His chariots had been his pride and his confidence, and we may suppose he had therefore despised and defied the armies of the living God, because they were all on foot, and had neither chariot nor horse, as he had; justly therefore is he thus made ashamed of his confidence, and forced to quit it, and thinks himself then most safe and easy when he is got clear of his chariot, though we may well suppose it the best made, and best drawn, of any of them. Thus are they disappointed who rest on the creature, like a broken reed, it not only breaks under them, but runs into their hand, and pierceth them with many sorrows. The idol may quickly become a burden, *Ist.* xlvii. 1. and what we were sick for, God can make us sick of. How sneakingly doth Sisera look now he is dismounted! it is hard to say whether he blusheth or trembleth more. Put not your trust in princes, if they may so soon be brought to this; if he, who but lately trusted to his arms with so much assurance, must now trust to his heels only with so little.

2. He fled for shelter to the tents of the Kenites, having no strong-hold, nor any place of his own in reach to retire to; the mean and solitary way of the Kenites living perhaps he had formerly despised and ridiculed, and the more, because religion was kept up among them; yet now he is glad to put himself under the protection of one of these tents. And he chooseth the wife's tent or apartment, either because he suspected, or because it happened to be next to him, and the first he came to, *ver.* 17. And that which encouraged him to go thither, was, that at this time there was peace between his master and the house of Heber. Not that there was any league offensive and defensive between them, only at present there was no indications of hostility. Jabin did them no harm, did not oppress them as he did the Israelites; their plain, quiet, harmless way of living, making them not suspected or feared; and perhaps God so ordering it as a recompence for their constant adherence to the true religion. Sisera thought he might therefore be safe among them, not considering, that though they themselves suffered not by Jabin's power, they heartily sympathized with the Israel of God that did.

3. Jael invited him in, and bid him very welcome. Probably she stood at her tent door to enquire what news from the army, and what the success of the battle was which was fought not far off. (1.) She invited him in. Perhaps she stood waiting for an opportunity to shew kindness to any distressed Israelite, if there should have been occasion for it; but seeing Sisera come in great haste, panting, and out of breath, she invited him to come and repose himself in her tent, in which while she seemed to design the relieving of his fatigue, perhaps she really intended the retarding of his flight, that he might fall into the hands of Barak, who was now in full chase of him, *ver.* 18. and it may well be questioned, whether she had at first any thought of taking away his life, but rather that God afterwards put it into her heart, (2.) She made very much of him, and seemed mighty careful to have him easy, as her invited guest. Was he weary? she finds him a very convenient place to repose himself in, and recruit his strength? Was he thirsty? well he might. Did he want a little water to cool his tongue? the best liquor her tent afforded was at his service, and that was milk, *ver.* 19. which, we may suppose, he drank heartily of, and being refreshed with it, was the better disposed to sleep. Was he cold, or afraid of catching cold; or did he desire to be hid from the pursuers, if they should search that tent? she covered him with a mantle, *ver.* 18. All expressions of her care for his safety. Only when he desired her to tell a lie for him, and to say he was not there, she declined making any such promise, *ver.* 20. We must not sin against God, no not to oblige those we would shew ourselves most obedient of. Lastly, We must suppose she kept her tent as quiet as she could, and free from noise, that he might sleep the sounder and the faster. And now was Sisera least safe, when he was most secure. How uncertain and precarious is human life! and what assurance can we have of it, when it may be so easily betrayed by those with whom it is trusted; and they may prove its destroyers, who, we hoped, would have been its protectors. It is best making God our friend, for he will not deceive us.

4. When he lay fast asleep she drove a long nail through his temples, so fastened his head to the ground, and killed him, *ver.* 21. And though this was enough to do his business, yet to make sure work (if we translate it right, *chap.* v. 26.) she cut off his head and left it nailed there. Whether she designed this or no when she invited him into her tent, doth not appear, probably the thought was darted into her mind when she saw him lie so fair to receive such a fatal blow; and, doubtless, the thought brought with it evidence sufficient, that it came not from Satan as a murderer and destroyer,

but from God as a righteous judge and avenger; so much of brightness and heavenly light did she perceive in the inducements to it that offered themselves, the honour of God, and the deliverance of Israel, and nothing of the blackness of malice, hatred, or personal revenge. (1.) It was a divine power that enabled her to do it, and inspired her with more than manly courage; what if her hand should shake, and she should miss her blow! What if he should awake when she was attempting it? Or suppose some of his own attendants should follow him, and surprise her in the fact, how dearly would she and all hers be made to pay for it? Yet, obtaining help of God, she doth it effectually. (2.) It was a divine warrant that justified her in the doing of it; and therefore since no such extraordinary commissions can now be pretended, it ought not in any case to be imitated. The laws of friendship and hospitality must be religiously observed, and we must abhor the thought of betraying any whom we have invited and encouraged to put a confidence in us. And as to this fact of Jael's (like that of Ehud's in the chapter before) we have reason to think she was conscious of such a divine impulse upon her spirit to do it, as did abundantly satisfy herself, and it ought therefore to satisfy us, that it was well done. God's judgments are a great deep. The instrument of this execution was a nail of the tent, *i. e.* one of the great pins with which the tent or the stake of it were fastened. They often removing their tents she had been used to drive these nails, and therefore knew how to do it the more dextrously on this great occasion. He that had thought to have destroyed Israel with his many iron chariots, is himself destroyed with one iron nail; thus do the weak things of the world confound the mighty. See here Jael's glory, and Sisera's shame. The great commander dies, (1.) In his sleep, fast asleep and weary. It comes in as a reason, why he stirred not to make any resistance; so fettered was he in the chains of sleep, that he could not find his hands; thus the stout-hearted are spoiled, *at thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, they are cast into a dead sleep*, and so are made to sleep their last, *Psal.* lxxvi. 5, 6. Let not the strong man glory in his strength, for when he sleeps, where is it? It is weak, and he can do nothing; a child may insult him then, and steal his life from him, and yet if he sleep not, he is soon spent and weary, and can do nothing neither. These words which we here put in a parenthesis (*for he was weary*) all the ancient versions read otherwise, he struggled (or sprinted, as we say) and died. So the Syriac and Arabic, *exagitant sese mortuus est*. He fainted and died. So the Chaldee. He was darkened and died, so the LXX. *Confusians morte soporem*, so the vulgar Latin, joining sleep and death together, seeing they are so near akin. He fainted and died. He dies, (2.) With his head nailed to the ground, an emblem of his earthly-mindedness. *O curvae in terram animae!* His ear (saith Bishop Hall) was fastened so close to the earth, as if his body had been listening what was become of his soul. He dies, (3.) By the hand of a woman. This added to the shame of his death before men, and had he but known it as Abimelech did, *Judges* ix. 54. we may well imagine how much it would have added to the vexation of his own heart.

(2.) Here is the glory and joy of Israel hereupon.

1. Barak their leader finds his enemy dead, *ver.* 22. and very well pleased, no doubt he was, to find his work done so well to his hands, and so much to the glory of God, and the confusion of his enemies. Had he stood too nicely upon a point of honour, he would have resented it as an affront to have the general slain by any hand but his; but now he remembered that this diminution of his honour he was sentenced to undergo for insisting upon Deborah's going with him; *the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman*, though then it was little thought the prediction would have been fulfilled in such a way as this.

2. Israel is completely delivered out of the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, *ver.* 23, 24. They not only shook off his yoke by the day's victory, but they afterwards prosecuted the war against him till they had destroyed him, he and his nation being by the divine appointment devoted to ruin, and not to be spared. The Israelites having soundly smarted for their foolish pity in not doing it before, resolve now it is in their power, to indulge them no longer, but to make a thorough riddance of them, as a people to whom to shew mercy, was as contrary to their own interest as it was to God's command. And, probably, it is with an eye to the sentence they were under, that this enemy is named three times here in these two last verses, and called king of Canaan, for as such he was to be destroyed, and so thoroughly was he destroyed, that I do not remember to read of the kings of Canaan any more after this. The children of Israel had prevented a great deal of mischief if they had sooner destroyed these Canaanites, as God had both commanded and enabled them; but better be wise late, and buy it by experience, than never wise.

C H A P. V.

*This chapter is the triumphant song which was composed, and sung upon occasion of that glorious victory which Israel obtained over the forces of Jabin, king of Canaan, and the happy consequences of that victory. Probably it was usual then to publish poems upon such occasions, as now, but this only is preserved of all the poems of that age of Judges, because dictated by Deborah a prophetess, designed for a Psalm of praise then, and a pattern of praise to after-ages, and it gives a great deal of light to the history of those times. (1.) It begins with praise to God, *ver.* 2, 3. (2.) The substance of this song transmits the memory of this great achievement. 1. Comparing God's appearances for them on this occasion with his appearances to them on mount Sinai, *ver.* 4, 5. 2. Magnifying their deliverance from the consideration of the calamitous condition they had been in, *ver.* 6, 7, 8. 3. Calling those to join in praise that shared in the benefits of the success, *ver.* 9—13. 4. Reflecting honour upon those tribes that were forward and active in that war, and disgrace on those that declined the service, *ver.* 14—19, 23. 5. Taking notice how God himself fought for them, *ver.* 20—22. 6. Celebrating particularly the honour of Jael that slew Sisera, on which head the song is very large, *ver.* 24—30. (3.) It concludes with a prayer to God, *ver.* 31.*

1. **T**HEN sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam, on that day, saying. 2. Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves. 3. Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes: I, even I, will sing unto the LORD, I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel. 4. LORD, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, and clouds also dropped water.

water. 5. The mountains melted from before the LORD, even Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel.

The former chapter let us know what great things God had done for Israel, in this we have the thankful returns they made to God, that all ages of the Church might learn that work of heaven, to praise God.

1. God is praised by a song. Which is, (1.) A very natural expression of rejoicing; is any merry? let him sing: and holy joy is the very soul and root of praise and thanksgiving. God is pleased to reckon himself glorified by our joy in him and in his wondrous works. His servants joy is his delight, and their songs melody to him. (2.) A very proper expedient for spreading the knowledge, and perpetuating the remembrance of great events. Neighbours would learn this song one of another, and the children of their parents, and by that means they who had not books, or could not read, yet would be made acquainted with these works of God. And one generation would thus praise God's works to another, and declare his mighty acts, *Psal. cxlv. 4, &c.*

2. Deborah herself penned this song, as appears by, *ver. 7. Till that I, Deborah, arose.* And the first words should be rendered, *Then she sung, even Deborah.* She used her gifts as a prophetess in composing the song, and the strain is thought very fine and lofty, the images lively, the expressions elegant, and an admirable mixture there is in it of sweetness and majesty; no poetry is comparable to the sacred poetry. And we may suppose she used her power as a princess, in obliging the conquering army of Israel to learn and sing this song. She expects not that they should by their poems celebrate her praises and magnify her, but requires, that in this poem they should join with her in celebrating God's praises and magnifying him. She had been the first wheel in the action, and now is so in the thanksgiving.

3. It was sung on that day, not the very day that the fight was, but on that occasion, and soon after, as soon as thanksgiving day could conveniently be appointed. When we have received mercy from God, we ought to be speedy in our returns of praise, while the impressions of mercy are fresh. It is rent to be paid at the day.

1. She begins with a general hallelujah, *Praise (or bless, for that is the word) ye the Lord, ver. 2.* The design of her song is to give glory to God, that therefore is put first to direct and explain all that follows, like the first petition of the Lord's prayer, *hallowed be thy name.* Two things God is here praised for. (1.) The vengeance he took on Israel's enemies, for the avenging of Israel upon their proud and cruel oppressors, recompensing into their bosoms all the injuries they had done to his people. *The Lord is known as a righteous God, and the God to whom vengeance belongs, by the judgments which he executeth.* (2.) The grace he gives to Israel's friends; when the people willingly offered themselves to serve in this war. God is to have the glory of all the good offices that are at any time done us, and the more willingly they are done, the more is to be observed of that grace which gives both to will and to do. For these two things she resolves to leave this song upon record, to the honour of the everlasting God, *ver. 3. I, even I, will sing unto the Lord Jehovah; that God of incontestible sovereignty, and irresistible power, even to the Lord God of Israel, who governs all for the good of the Church.*

2. She calls to the great ones of the world that sit at the upper end of its table to attend to her song, and take notice of the subject of it. *Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes.* (1.) She would have them know, that as great and as high as they were, there is one above them, with whom it is folly to contend, and to whom it is their interest to submit. That horses and chariots are vain things for safety. (2.) She would have them to join with her in praising the God of Israel, and no longer to praise their counterfeit deities, as Belsazzar did, *Dan. v. 4. He praised the gods of gold and silver.* She bespeaks them as the Psalmist, *Psal. ii. 10, 11. Bewise now therefore, O ye kings, serve the Lord with fear.* (3.) She would have them take warning by Sisera's fate, and not dare to offer any injury to the people of God, whose cause, sooner or later, God will plead with jealousy.

3. She looks back upon God's former appearances, and compares this with them, the more to magnify the glorious author of this great salvation. What God is doing should bring to our mind what he has done, for he is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever, *ver. 4. Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir.* This may be understood, either, 1. Of the appearances of God's power and justice against the enemies of Israel to subdue and conquer them, and so, *Hab. iii. 3, 4, &c.* is parallel to it, where the destruction of the Church's enemies is thus described. When God had led his people Israel from the country of Edom, he brought down under their feet Sihon and Og, striking them and their armies with such terror and amazement, that they seemed apprehensive heaven and earth were coming together. Their hearts melted as if all the world had been melted round about them. Or it notes the glorious displays of the divine majesty, and the surprising efforts of the divine power, enough to make the earth tremble, the heavens drop like snow before the sun, and the mountains to melt; compare, *Psal. xviii. 7.* God's counsels are so far from being hindered by any creature, that when the time of their accomplishment comes, that which seemed to stand in their way, will not only yield before them but be made to serve them. See *Isa. lxiv. 1, 2.* Or, 2. It is meant of the appearances of God's glory and majesty to Israel, when he gave them his law at mount Sinai. It was then literally true the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, &c. Compare *Deut. xxxiii. 2. Psal. lxxviii. 7, 8.* Let all the kings and princes know that this is the God whom Deborah praise, and not such mean and impotent deities as they paid their homage to. The Chaldee paraphrase applies it to the giving of the law, but has a strange dissent on those words, *the mountains melted.* The mountains, Tabor, Hermon and Carmel, contended among themselves, one said let the divine majesty dwell upon me; the other said, let it dwell upon me; but God made it to dwell upon mount Sinai, the meanest and least of all the mountains; I suppose it means the least valuable, because barren and rocky.

6. In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the high-ways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through by-ways. 7. The inhabitants of the villages ceased; they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel. 8. They chose new gods; then was war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel? 9. My heart is toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people: Bless ye the LORD. 10. Speak ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way. 11. They that are delivered from the noise of archers in

the places of drawing water: there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the LORD, even the righteous acts toward the inhabitants of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the LORD go down to the gates.

Here, 1. Deborah describes the distressed state of Israel under the tyranny of Jabin, that the greatness of their trouble might make their salvation appear the more illustrious, and the more gracious, *ver. 6. From the days of Shamgar, who did something towards the deliverance of Israel from the Philistines, to the days of Jael, the present day, in which Jael has so signalized herself, the country has been in a manner desolate.* 1. No trade, for want of soldiers to protect men of business in their business from the incursions of the enemy, and for want of magistrates to restrain and punish thieves and robbers among themselves, men of broken fortunes, and desperate spirits, that having no employment, took to rob on the high-road; all commerce ceased, and the high-ways were unoccupied; no caravans of merchants, as formerly. 2. No travelling. Whereas in times when there was some order and government, the travellers might be safe in the open roads, and the robbers were forced to the by-ways: now on the contrary the robbers insulted the open roads without check, and the honest travellers were obliged to sculk, and walk through by-ways in continual frights. (3.) No tillage. The fields must needs be laid waste and unoccupied, when the inhabitants of the villages, the country farmers, ceased their employment, quitted their houses, which were continually alarmed and plundered by the rapparees, and were obliged to take shelter for themselves and their families in walled and fenced cities. (4.) No administration of justice. There was war in the gates where their gates were kept, *ver. 8.* So that it was not till this salvation was wrought, that the people of the Lord durst go down to the gates, *ver. 11.*

The continual incursions of the enemy deprived the magistrates of the dignity, and the people of the benefit of their government. (5.) No peace to him that went out, or to him that came in. The gates through which they passed and repassed were infested by the enemy, nay, the places of drawing water were alarmed by the archers; a mighty achievement, to terrify the drawers of water. (6.) Neither arms nor spirit to help themselves with, not a shield nor spear seen among forty thousand, *ver. 8.* Either they were disarmed by their oppressors, or they themselves neglected the art of war; so that though they had spears and shields, they were not to be seen, but were thrown by and suffered to rust, they having neither skill nor will to use them.

2. She shews in one word what it was that brought all this misery upon them, *they chose new gods, ver. 8.* It was their idolatry that provoked God to give them up thus into the hands of their enemies. The Lord their God was one Lord, but that would not content them, they must have more, many more, still more. Their God was the ancient of days, still the same, and therefore they grew weary of him, and have new gods, which they were as fond of as children of new cloaths; names newly invented, heroes new canonized. Their fathers, when put to their choice, chose the Lord for their God, *Josh. xxiv. 21.* but they would not abide by that choice, they must have gods of their own chusing.

3. She takes notice of God's great goodness to Israel, in raising up such as should redress their grievances. Herself first, *ver. 7. Till that I Deborah arose,* to restrain and punish those who disturb the public peace, and protect men in their business, and then the face of things was changed for the better presently; those beasts of prey retired upon the breaking forth of this joyful light, and *man went forth again to his work and labour, Psal. civ. 22, 23.* Thus she became a mother in Israel, a nursing mother, such was the affection she bore to her people, and such the care and pains she took for the public welfare. Under her there were other governors of Israel, *ver. 9.* who like her had done their part as governors to reform the people, and then like her offered themselves willingly to serve in the war, not insisting upon the exemption which their dignity and office intitled them to, when they had so fair an opportunity of appearing in their country's cause, and, no doubt, the example of the governors influenced the people in like manner, *willingly to offer themselves, ver. 2.* Of these governors she saith, *my heart is toward him, i. e. I truly love and honour them, they have won my heart for ever, I shall never forget them.* Note, Those are worthy of double honour that recede voluntarily from the demands of their honour to serve God and his Church.

4. She calls upon those who had a particular share in the advantages of this great salvation, to offer up particular thanks to God for it, *ver. 10, 11.* Let every man speak as he found of the goodness of God in this happy change of the posture of public affairs. (1.) *Ye that ride on white asses, i. e. the nobility and gentry.* Horses were little used in that country, they had, it is likely, a much better breed of asses than we have; but persons of quality, it seems, were distinguished by the colour of the asses they rode on, the white being more rare were therefore more valued. Notice is taken of Abdon's sons and grandsons riding on asses, as speaking them men of distinction, *Judg. xii. 14.* Let such who are by this salvation restored, not only to their liberty as other Israelites, but to their dignity, speak God's praises. (2.) Let them that sit in judgment be sensible of it, and thankful, for it is a very good mercy, that they may sit safely there, that the sword of justice is not struck out of their hand by the sword of war. (3.) Let them that walk by the way, and meet with none there to make them afraid, speak to themselves in pious meditations, and to their fellow-travellers in religious discourses of the goodness of God in ridding the roads of those Banditti that had so long infested them. (4.) Let them that draw water in peace, and have not their wells taken from them, or stopped up, nor are in danger of being caught by the enemy when they go forth to draw, there where they find themselves so much more safe and easy than they have been, there let them rehearse the acts of the Lord, not Deborah's acts, or Barak's, but the Lord's taking notice of his hand making peace in our borders, and creating a defence upon all the glory. This is the Lord's doing. Observe in these acts of his, 1. Justice executed on his daring enemies. They are the righteous acts of the Lord. See him pleading a righteous cause, and sitting in the throne judging aright, and give him glory as the judge of all the earth. 2. Kindness shewed to his trembling people, the inhabitants of the villages, who lay most open to the enemy, had suffered most, and were most in danger, *Erod. xxxviii. 11.* It is the glory of God to protect those that are most exposed, and to help the weakest. Let us all take notice of the share we in particular have in the public peace and tranquillity, the inhabitants of the villages especially, and to give God the praise of it.

12. Awake, awake, Deborah: awake awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive thou son of Abinoam. 13. Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the LORD made me have dominion over the mighty. 14. Out of Ephraim was there a root of them against Amalek:

Amalek; after thee Benjamin, among thy people: out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer. 15. And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah: even Issachar, and also Barak, he was sent on foot into the valley: for the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart. 16. Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? for the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. 17. Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches. 18. Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death, in the high places of the field. 19. The kings came and fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo, they took no gain of money. 20. They fought from heaven, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. 21. The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon: O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength. 22. Then were the horse-hoofs broken, by the means of the pransings, the pransings of their mighty ones. 23. Curse ye Meroz, (said the angel of the LORD) curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof: because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.

Here, I. Deborah stirs up herself and Barak to celebrate this victory in the most solemn manner to the glory of God and the honour of Israel, for the encouragement of their friends, and the greater confusion of their enemies, ver. 12. (1.) Deborah, as a prophetess, must do it by a song, to compose and sing which she excites herself, *awake, awake*; and again *awake, awake*. Which speaks the sense she had of the excellency and difficulty of the work, it needed and well deserved the utmost liveliness and vigour of soul in the performance of it; all the powers and faculties of the soul in their closest intention and application ought to be employed in it: also the sense she had of her own infirmity, and aptness to flag and remit of her zeal in this work. Note, Praising God is work that we should awake to, and awake ourselves to, *Psal. cviii. 2.* (2.) Barak, as a general, must do it by a triumph, *lead thy captivity captive*. Though the army of Sisera was cut off in the field, and no quarter given, yet we may suppose in the prosecution of the victory, when the war was carried into the enemies' country, many not found in arms were seized and made prisoners of war, these she would have led in chains after Barak, when he made his public entry into his own city to grace his triumphs; not as if it should be any pleasure to him to trample upon his fellow-creatures, but that he must give glory to God, and serve that good purpose of his government, which is to *look upon those that are proud, and to abase them*.

2. She gives good reason for this praise and triumph, ver. 13. This glorious victory had made the remnant of Israel, and Deborah in particular, look very great, and God himself by it had done it. (1.) Israel was become few and inconsiderable, and yet to them God gave dominion over nobles. Many of them were cut off by the enemy, many died of grief, and perhaps some had removed their families and effects into foreign parts, and yet those few that remained, by divine assistance, with one brave and generous effort, not only shook off the yoke of oppression from their own neck, but got power over their oppressors. As long as any of God's Israel remain, (and a remnant God will have in the worst of times) there is hopes, be it never so small a remnant, for God can make him that remaineth, though it should be but one single person, triumph over the most proud and potent. (2.) Deborah was herself of the weaker sex, and the sex that from the fall had been sentenced to subjection, and yet the Lord that is himself higher than the highest, authorized her to rule over the mighty men of Israel, who willingly submitted to her conduct; and enabled her to triumph over the mighty men of Canaan, who fell before the army she commanded; so wonderfully did he *advance the low estate of his hand-maid*. The Lord made me, a woman, have dominion over mighty men. A despised stone made head of the corner. This is indeed the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes.

3. She makes particular remarks on the several parties concerned in this great action, taking notice who fought against them, who fought for them, and who stood neuter.

1. Who fought against them. The power of the enemy must be taken notice of, that the victory may appear the more glorious. Jabin and Sisera had been mentioned in the history, but here it appears farther; 1. That Amalek was in league with Jabin, and sent him in assistance, or endeavoured to do it. Ephraim is here said to act against Amalek, ver. 14. probably intercepting and cutting off some forces of the Amalekites that were upon their march to join Sisera. Amalek had helped Moab to oppress Israel, *chap. iii. 13.* and now Jabin; they were inveterate enemies to God's people, whose hand had always been against the throne of the Lord, *Exod. xvii. 16.* and therefore the more dangerous. 2. That others of the kings of Canaan, who had somewhat recovered themselves since their defeat by Joshua, joined with Jabin, and strengthened his army with their forces, having the same implacable enmity to Israel that he had, and those kingdoms when they were in their strength, having been subject to that of Hazor, *Josh. xi. 10.* These kings came and fought, ver. 19. Israel had no king, their enemies had many, whose power and influence, especially acting in confederacy, made them very formidable; and yet Israel having the Lord for their king, was too hard for them all. It is said of these kings they took no gain of money, they were not mercenary troops hired into the service of Jabin, such often fail in an extremity, but they were volunteers, and hearty in the cause against Israel. *Desired not the riches of silver*, so the Chaldees, but only the satisfaction of helping to ruin Israel. Acting upon this principle they were the more formidable, and would be the more cruel.

2. Who fought for them. The several tribes that assisted in this great exploit, are here spoken of with honour, for though God is chiefly to be glorified, instruments must have their due praise, for the encouragement of others; but after all it was heaven that turned the scale.

1. Ephraim and Benjamin, those tribes among whom Deborah herself lived; beset themselves, and did bravely, by her influence upon them; for her palm-tree was in the tribe of Ephraim, and very near to that of Benjamin, ver. 14. *Out of Ephraim was there a root*, and life in the root against Amalek. There was in Ephraim a mountain called the mount of Amalek, No. XXXVI.

mentioned, *Judges xii. 15.* which some think is here meant, and some read it, there was a root in Amalek, i. e. in that mountain, a strong resolution in the minds of that people to make head against the oppressors, which was the root of the matter. Herein Benjamin had set them a good example among his people; Ephraim moved after thee, Benjamin; though Benjamin was the junior tribe, and much inferior, especially at this time, to Ephraim, both in number and wealth, yet when they led, Ephraim followed in appearing for the common cause. If we be not so bold as to lead, yet, we must not be so proud and fullen as not to follow even our inferiors in a good work. Ephraim was at a distance from the place of action, and therefore could not send forth many of its boughs to the service; but Deborah, who was one of them, knew there was a root of them, that they were hearty well-wishers to the cause. Dr. Lightfoot gives quite another sense of this; Joshua of Ephraim had been a root of such victories against Amalek, *Exod. xvii.* and Ehud of Benjamin lately against Amalek and Moab.

2. The ice being broke by Ephraim and Benjamin, Machir (the half-tribe of Manasseh beyond Jordan) and Zebulun sent in men that were very serviceable to this great design. When an army is to be raised, especially upon such disadvantages as Barak was now under by the long disuse of arms, and the dispiritedness of the people, it is of great consequence to be furnished, (1.) With men of courage for officers, and such the family of Machir furnished them with, for thence came down governors. The children of Machir were particularly famous for their valour in Moses's time, *Numb. xxxii. 39.* and it seems it continued in their family, the more because they were seated in the frontiers. (2.) With men of learning and ingenuity, for secretaries of war, and with such they were supplied out of Zebulun, thence came men that handle the pen of the writer, clerks that issued out orders, wrote circular letters, drew commissions, mustered their men, and kept their accounts. Thus must every man, according as he has received the gift, minister the same, for the public good, *1 Pet. iv. 10.* the eyes see and the ears hear for the whole body. I know it is generally understood of the forwardness even of the scholars of this tribe, who studied the law and expounded it, to take up arms in this cause, though they were better skilled in books than in the art of war. So Sir Richard Blackmore paraphraseth it.

*The scribes of Zebulun and learned men,
To wield the sword laid down the pen.*

3. Issachar did good service too; though he saw that rest was good, and therefore bowed his shoulder to bear, which is the character of that tribe, *Gen. xlix. 15.* yet they disclaimed to bear the yoke of Jabin's tribute, and now preferred the generous toils of war before a servile rest. Though it should seem there were not many common soldiers lifted out of that tribe, yet the princes of Issachar were with Deborah and Barak, ver. 15. probably as a great council of war to advise upon emergencies. And it should seem these princes of Issachar did in person accompany Barak into the field of battle. Did he go on foot? they footed it with him, not consulting their honour or ease; did he go into the valley? the place of most danger, they exposed themselves with him, and were still at his right hand to advise him? for the men of Issachar were men that had understanding of the times, *1 Chron. xii. 32.*

4. Zebulun and Naphtali were the most bold and active of all the tribes, not only out of a particular affection to Barak their countryman, but because they lying nearest to Jabin, the yoke of oppression lay heavier on their necks than on any other. Better die in honour than live in bondage; and therefore in a pious zeal for God and their country, they jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field, ver. 18. with what heroic bravery did they charge and push on, even upon the chariots of iron, despising danger, and setting death itself at defiance in so good a cause.

5. The stars from heaven appeared, or acted at least, on Israel's side, ver. 20. The stars in their courses according to the order and direction of him who is the great Lord of their hosts, fought against Sisera, by their malignant influences; or by causing the storms of hail and thunder, which contributed so much to the rout of Sisera's army. The Chaldees read it from heaven, from the place where the stars go forth, war was waged against Sisera, i. e. the power of the God of heaven was engaged against him, making use of the ministration of the angels of heaven. Some way or other the heavenly bodies, not arrested, as when the sun stood still at Joshua's word, but going on in their courses, fought against Sisera. Those whom God is an enemy to, the whole creation is at war with. Perhaps the flashes of lightning, by which the stars fought, was that which frightened the horses, so as that they pranced till their very hoofs were broken, ver. 22. and probably overturned the chariots of iron which they drew, or turned them back upon their owners.

6. The river of Kishon fought against them. It swept them away, and abundance of them that hoped to make their escape through it, ver. 21. Ordinarily it was but a shallow river, and being in their own country, we may suppose they well knew its fords, and safest passages, and yet now probably by the great rain that fell it was so swelled, and the stream so deep and strong, that those that attempted to pass it were drowned, being feeble and faint, and unable to make their way through it. And then were the horse-hoofs broken by means of the plungings. So it is in the margin, ver. 22. The river of Kishon is called that ancient river, because described or celebrated by ancient historians or poets, or rather because it was designed of old in the counsel of God, to serve his purposes against Sisera at this time, and did so as if it had been made on purpose; thus the water of the old pool God is said to have fashioned long ago, for that use to which it was put, *Isa. xxii. 11.*

7. Deborah's own soul fought against them; she speaks of it with a holy exultation, ver. 21. *O my soul thou hast trodden down strength*. She did it by exciting others to do it, and assisting them, which she did with all her heart; also by her prayers; as Moses conquered Amalek by lifting up his hand, so Deborah vanquished Sisera by lifting up her heart. And when the soul is employed in holy exercises, and heart-work is made of them, through the grace of God, the strength of our spiritual enemies will be trodden down, and will fall before us.

5. In this great engagement she observes who stood neuter, and did not side with Israel as might have been expected. It is strange to find how many, even of those that were called Israelites, basely deserted this glorious cause, and declined to appear. No mention is made of Judah or Simeon among the tribes concerned, because they lying so very remote from the scene of action, had not an opportunity to appear, and therefore it was not expected from them; but for those that lay near, and yet would not venture, indelible marks of disgrace are here put upon them, and they deserved it.

1. Reuben basely declined the service, ver. 15, 16. Justly had he long ago been deprived of the privileges of the birth-right, and still doth his dying father's doom stick by him, *unstable as water, he shall not excel*. Two things hindered them from engaging. (1.) Their divisions. This jarring string the twice strikes upon their shame. For the divisions of Reuben

(or in these divisions) there were great thoughts, impressions and searchings of heart. Not only for their division from Canaan by the river Jordan, that needed not to have hindered them, had they been hearty in the cause, for Gilead abode beyond Jordan, and yet from Machir of Gilead came down governors; but it means either that they were divided among themselves, could not agree who should go, or who should lead, each striving to gain the posts of honour, and shun those of danger, some unhappy contests in their tribe kept them from uniting together, and with their brethren, for the common good. Or, that they were divided in their opinion of this war from the rest of the tribes, thought the attempt either not justifiable, or not practicable, and therefore blamed those that engaged in it, and did themselves decline it; this occasioned great searchings of heart among the rest; especially when they had reason to suspect that whatever Reuben pretended, his sitting still now proceeded from a cooling of his affections to his brethren, and an alienation of mind from them, which occasioned them many sad thoughts. It grieves us to see our mothers children angry with us for doing our duty, and looking strange upon us when we most need their friendship and assistance. (2.) Their business in the world. *Reuben abode among the sheep-folds*, a warmer and safer place than the camp, pretending they could not conveniently leave the sheep they tended; he loved to hear the bleatings of the flocks, or, as some read it, the whistlings of the flocks, the music which the shepherds made with their oaten reeds or pipes, and the pastoralists they sung, these Reuben preferred before the martial drum and trumpet. Thus many are kept from doing their duty by the fear of trouble, the love of ease, and an inordinate affection to their worldly business and advantage. Narrow selfish spirits care not what comes of the interest of God's church, so they can but get, keep, and save money; *All seek their own*, Phil. ii. 21.

2. Dan and Asher did the same, ver. 17. These two lay on the sea-coast, and (1.) Dan pretended he could not leave his ships, but they would be exposed, and therefore *I pray thee have me excused*. Those of that tribe perhaps pleaded that their sea trade dis-fitted them for land service, and diverted them from it; but Zebulun also was a haven of ships, a sea-faring tribe, and yet was forward and active in this expedition. There is no excuse we make to shift off duty but what some or other have broken through and set aside, whose courage and resolution will rise up against us and shame us. (2.) Asher pretended he must stay at home to repair the breaches which the sea had in some places made upon his land, and to fortify his works against the encroachments of it; or he abode in his creeks, or small havens, where his trading vessels lay to attend them. A little thing will serve those for a pretence to stay at home that have no mind to engage in the most necessary services, because there is difficulty and danger in them.

3. But above all Meroz is condemned, and a curse pronounced upon the inhabitants of it, *Because they came not to the help of the Lord*, ver. 23. Probably, this was some city that lay near the scene of action, and therefore had a fair opportunity of shewing their obedience to God, their concerns for Israel, and of doing good service to the common cause, but they basely declined it, for fear of Jabin's iron chariots, being willing to sleep in a whole skin. The Lord needed not their help, he made it to appear he could do his work without them; but that was no thanks to them; for ought they knew the attempt might have miscarried for want of their hand; and therefore they are cursed for *not coming to the help of the Lord*, when it was in effect proclaimed, *Who is on the Lord's side?* The cause between God and the mighty, the principalities and powers of the kingdom of darkness will not admit of a neutrality. God looks upon those as against him that *are not with him*. The curse is pronounced by the *angel of the Lord*, our Lord Jesus, the captain of the Lord's host, and those whom he *curseth are cursed indeed*, and further than we have warrant and authority from him we may not curse. He that will richly reward all his good soldiers, will certainly and severely punish cowards and deserters. This city of Meroz seems to have been at this time a considerably place, since something great was expected from it, but probably after the angel of the Lord had pronounced this curse upon it, it dwindled, and like the fig-tree which Christ cursed withered away, so that we never read of it after this in scripture.

24. Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent. 25. He asked water, and she gave him milk, she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. 26. She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workman's hammer: and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples. 27. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed, there he fell down dead. 28. The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattices, *Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?* 29. Her wife ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself, 30. Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey, to every man a damsel or two? to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needle-work, of divers colours of needle-work on both sides, *meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?* 31. So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love him, be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years.

Deborah here concludes this triumphant song.

1. With the praises of Jael, her sister hero, whose valiant act had completed and crowned the victory. She had mentioned her before, ver. 6. as one that would have served her country if it had been in her power, now she applauds her as one that did serve it admirably well when it was in her power. Her poetry is finest and most florid here in the latter end of the song. How honourably doth she speak of Jael, ver. 24. who preferred her peace with the God of Israel before her peace with the king of Canaan, and though not a native of Israel (for ought appears) yet heartily espoused the cause of Israel in this critical conjuncture, jeopardied her life as truly as if she had been in the high places of the field, and bravely fought for those whom she saw God fought for? *Blessed shall she be above women in the tent*. Note, Those whose lot is cast in the tent, in a very low and narrow sphere of activity; if they serve God in that according to their capacity, shall in no wise lose their reward. Jael in the tent wins as rich a blessing as Barak in the field.

Nothing is more confounding, grievous, and shameful than disappointment, and Deborah here doth most elegantly describe two great disappointments, the shame of which was typical of sinners everlasting shame.

1. Sisera found a fatal enemy where he expected a fast and faithful friend. (1.) Jael shewed him the kindness of a friend, and perhaps at that time intended him no other than kindness, until God by an immediate impulse upon her mind (which impulses then were to be regarded, and carried so much of their own evidence with them that they might have been relied upon, but cannot now be pretended to) directed her to do otherwise, ver. 25. He asked only for fair water to quench his thirst, but she, not only to shew her housewifery and good housekeeping, but to express her respect to him, gave him milk and brought forth butter, that is, (say some interpreters) milk which had the butter taken from it (we call it butter-milk.) No, (say others) it was milk that had the butter still yet in it, we call it cream; whichever it was, it is like it was the best her house afforded; and, to set it off, she brought it in a lordly dish, such as she called so, the finest she had, and better than the ordinarily used at her own table. This confirmed Sisera's opinion of her friendship, and made him sleep the faster and the more secure. But, (2.) She proved his mortal enemy, gave him his death's stroke: it is curiously described, ver. 26, 27. (1.) How great doth Jael look hammering Sisera, as it is in the margin, mauling that proud man, that had been so long the terror of the mighty, and sending him down slain to the pit with his iniquities upon his bones? Ezek. xxxii. 27. She seems to have gone about it with no more terror or concern than if he had been going to nail one of the boards or bars of her tent, so confident was she of divine aid and protection. We read it, she *smote off his head*, probably with his own sword, which, now his head was nailed through, she durst take from his side, but not before, for fear of waking him. But because there was no occasion for cutting off his head, nor was it mentioned in the history, many think it should be read, *she struck through his head*. That head which had been proudly lifted up against God and Israel, and in which had been forged bloody designs for the destruction of God's people, Jael finds a soft place in, and into that with a good-will strikes her nail. (2.) How mean doth Sisera look, fallen at Jael's feet? ver. 27. At the feet of this female executioner he bowed, he fell, all his struggles for life availed not, she followed her blow until he fell down dead. There lies extended the deserted carcase of that proud man, not in the bed of honour, not in the high places of the field, nor having any glorious wound to shew from a glittering sword, or a bow of steel, but in the corner of a tent, at the feet of a woman, with a disgraceful wound by a sorry nail struck through his head. Thus is shame the fate of proud men. And it is a very lively representation of the ruin of those sinners whose prosperity flays them, it flatters and caresses them with milk and butter in a lordly dish, as if it would make them easy and happy, but it nails their heads and hearts too to the ground in earthly-mindedness, pierceth them through with many sorrows, its flatteries are fatal, and sink them at last into destruction and perdition, 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

2. Sisera's mother had the tidings brought her of her son's fall and ruin, then when she was big with expectation of his glorious and triumphant return, ver. 28, 29, 30. where we have, (1.) Her fond desire to see her son come back in triumph. *Why is his chariot so long in coming?* She speaks this not so much out of a concern for his safety, or any jealousy of his having miscarried, she had no fear of that, so confident was she of his success; but out of a longing for his glory, which with a feminine weakness she was passionately impatient to see, chides the lingering chariot, and expostulates concerning the delays of it, little thinking that her unhappy son had been before this forced to quit that chariot which they were so proud of, and which she thought came so slowly. *The chariots of his glory were now become the shame of his house*, Isa. xxii. 18. Let us take heed of indulging such desires as these towards any temporal good thing, particularly towards vain-glory, for that was it she here doted on. Eagerness and impatience in our desires do us a great deal of prejudice, and make it intolerable to us to be crossed: But towards the second coming of Jesus Christ, and the glories of that day, we should thus stand affected, *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly*, for here we cannot be disappointed. (2.) Her foolish hope and confidence that he would come at last in so much the greater pomp. Her wife ladies answered her, and thought they gave a very good account of the delay; yea, she (in her wisdom, saith the Chaldee, tauntingly) made answer to herself, *Have they not sped?* no doubt they have, and that which delays them is, that they are *dividing the prey*; which is so much that it is a work of time to make a distribution of it. In the spoil they please themselves with the thought of.

Observe, (1.) How imprudently, and to the reproach and scandal of their sex, these ladies boast of the multitude of damsels which the soldiers would have the abusing of. (2.) How childishly they please themselves with the hope of seeing Sisera himself in a gaudy mantle of *divers colours*, how charmingly would it look, of *divers colours of needle-work*, plundered out of the wardrobe of some Israelitish lady, it is repeated again, as that which pleased their fancy above any thing, of *divers colours of needle-work on both sides*, and therefore very rich; such pieces of embroidery they hoped Sisera would have to present his mother and the ladies with. Thus apt are we to deceive ourselves with great expectations, and confident hopes of honour and pleasure, and wealth in this world, by which we prepare for ourselves the shame and grief of a disappointment. And thus doth God often bring ruin on his enemies when they are most elevated.

2. She concludes all with a prayer to God; 1. For the destruction of all his foes; So, so shamefully, so miserably, let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; let all that hope to triumph in Israel's ruin be thus disappointed and triumphed over; *Do to them all as unto Sisera*, Psal. lxxxiii. 9. Though our enemies are to be prayed for, God's enemies, as such, are to be prayed against; and when we see some of God's enemies remarkably humbled and brought down, that is an encouragement to us to pray for the downfall of all the rest. Deborah was a prophetess, and this prayer was a prediction, that in due time all God's enemies shall perish, Psal. xcii. 9. None ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. 2. For the exaltation and comfort of all his friends. But let them that love him, and heartily wish well to his kingdom among men, be as the sun when he goeth forth in his strength; let them shine so bright, appear so glorious in the eye of the world, cast such benign influences, be as much out of the reach of their enemies, who curse the rising sun because it scorseth them; let them rejoice as a strong man to run a race, Psal. xix. 5. Let them, as burning and shining lights in their places, dispel the mists of darkness, and shine with more and more lustre and power unto the perfect day, Prov. iv. 18. Such shall be the honour, and such the joy of all that love God in sincerity, and for ever they shall shine as the sun in the firmament of our Father.

The victory here celebrated with this song, was of such happy consequence in Israel, that for the best part of one age they enjoyed the peace which it opened the way to; *The land had rest forty years*, i. e. so long it was from this victory to the raising up of Gideon. And well it had been, if when the Churches and the tribes had rest, they had been edified, and had walked in the fear of the Lord.

C H A P. VI.

Nothing that occurred in the quiet and peacable times of Israel is recorded, the forty years rest after the conquest of Jabin is passed over in silence, and here begins the story of another distress and another deliverance by Gideon, the fourth of the Judges. Here is (1.) The calamitous condition of Israel, by the inroads of the Midianites, ver. 1—6. (2.) The message God sent them by a prophet, by convincing them of sin, to prepare them for deliverance, ver. 7—10. (3.) The raising up of Gideon to be their deliverer, ver. 11—24. 2. The first-fruits of his government in the reforming of his father's house, ver. 25—32. 3. The preparations he made for a war with the Midianites, and the encouragement given him by a sign, ver. 33—40.

1. **AND** the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. 2. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong-holds. 3. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them: 4. And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. 5. For they came up with their cattle, and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude, for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it. 6. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.

Here is, (1.) Israel's sin renewed. They did evil in the sight of the Lord, ver. 1. The burnt child dreads the fire; yet this perverse unthinking people, that had so often smelted sorely for their idolatry, upon a little respite of God's judgments return to it again. This people hath a revolting, rebellious heart, not kept in awe by the terror of God's judgments, not engaged in honour and gratitude by the great things he had done for them, to keep themselves in his love. The providence of God will not change the hearts and lives of sinners.

2. Israel's troubles repeated. This would follow of course; let all that sin expect to suffer, let all that return to folly expect to return to misery, with the froward God will shew himself froward, Psal. xviii. 26. and will walk contrary to those that walk contrary to him, Lev. xxvi. 21—24. Now as to this trouble, (1.) It arose from a very despicable enemy. God delivered them into the hand of Midian, ver. 1. not Midian in the south where Jethro lived, but Midian in the east that joined to Moab, Numb. xxii. 4. A people that all men despised as uncultivated, and unheeded; hence we read not here of any king, lord, or general that they had, but the force with which they destroyed Israel was an undisciplined mob; but, which made it the more grievous, they were a people that Israel had formerly subdued, and in a manner destroyed, see Numb. xxxi. 7. and yet by this time, near two hundred years after, the poor remains of them were so multiplied, and so magnified, that they were capable of being made a very severe scourge to Israel. Thus God moved them to jealousy with those which were not a people, even a foolish nation, Deut. xxxii. 21. The meanest creature will serve to chastise those that have made the great Creator their enemy. And when those we are authorized to rule prove rebellious and disobedient to us, it concerns us to enquire whether we have not been so to our sovereign ruler. (2.) It arose to a very formidable height, ver. 2. the hand of Midian prevailed, purely by their multitude. God had promised to increase Israel as the sand on the sea, but their sin stopped their growth and diminished them, and then their enemies, though otherwise every way inferior to them, overpowered them with numbers. They came upon them as grasshoppers for multitude, ver. 5. not in a regular army to engage them in the field, but in a confused swarm to plunder the country, quarter themselves upon it, and enrich themselves with its spoils. Bands of robbers, and no better. And sinful Israel being separated by sin from God, had not spirit to make head against them. Observe the wretched havoc that these Midianites made with their rapparees in Israel. Here is, 1. The Israelites imprisoned, or rather imprisoning themselves in dens and caves, ver. 2. This was owing purely to their own timorousness and faint-heartedness, that they would rather fly than fight; it was the effect of a guilty conscience which made them tremble at the shaking of a leaf, and the just punishment of their apostacy from God, who thus fought against them with those very terrors with which he would otherwise have fought for them; had it not been for this, we cannot but think Israel a match for the Midianites, and able enough to make head against them: but the heart that departeth from God is lost, not only to that which is good, but to that which is great. Sin dispirits men, and makes them sneak into dens and caves. The day will come, when chief captains and mighty men will call in vain to rocks and mountains to hide them. 2. The Israelites impoverished, greatly impoverished, ver. 6. The Midianites, and other the children of the east, that joined with them to live by spoil and rapine, as long before the Sabaeans and Chaldeans did that plundered Job, free-booters, these made frequent incursions into the land of Canaan; that fruitful land was a great temptation to them; and that sloth and luxury into which the Israelites were sunk by forty years rest, made them and their substance an easy prey to them. They came up against them, ver. 3. pitched their camps upon them, ver. 4. and brought their cattle with them, particularly camels innumerable, ver. 5. not a flying party to make a sally upon them, and be gone presently but they resolved to force their way, penetrated through the heart of the country as far as Gaza, on the western side, ver. 4. they let the Israelites alone to sow their ground, but towards harvest they came and seized all, and eat it up, and destroyed it, both grass and corn, and when they went away took with them the sheep and oxen, so that in short they left no sustenance for Israel, except what was privately stolen by the rightful owners into the dens and caves. Now here we may see, 1. The justice of God in the punishment of their sin. They had neglected to honour God with their sub-

stance in tithes and offerings, and had prepared that for Baal with which God should have been served, and now God justly sends an enemy to take it away in the season thereof, Hos. ii. 8, 9. 2. The consequence of God's departure from a people; when he goes all good goes, and all mischiefs break in. When Israel kept in with God, they reaped what others sowed, Josh. xxiv. 13. Psal. cv. 44. but now God had forsaken them, others reaped what they sowed. Let us take occasion from this to bless God for our national peace and tranquillity, that we eat the labour of our hands.

3. Israel's sense of God's hand revived at last. Seven years, year after year, did the Midianites make these inroads upon them, each we may suppose worse than other, ver. 1. until at last, all other succours failing, Israel cried unto the Lord, ver. 6. for crying to Baal ruined them, and would not help them. When God judgeth he will overcome; and sinners shall be made either to bend or break before him.

7. ¶ And it came to pass when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, because of the Midianites; 8. That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage. 9. And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land; 10. And I said unto you, I am the LORD your God, fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.

Observe here, 1. The cognizance God took of the cries of Israel, when at length they were directed towards him. Though in their prosperity they had neglected him, and made court to his rivals, and though they never looked towards him till they were driven to it by extremity, yet upon their complaint and prayer he intended relief for them. Thus would he shew how ready he is to forgive, how swift he is to shew mercy, and how inclinable to hear prayer, that sinners may be encouraged to return and repent, Psal. cxxx. 1.

2. The method God took of working deliverance for them. Before he sent an angel to raise them up a saviour, he sent a prophet to reprove them for sin, and to bring them to repentance, ver. 8. This prophet is not named, but he was a man, a prophet, not an angel, as chap. ii. 1. Whether this prophet took an opportunity of delivering his message to the children of Israel, when they were met together in a general assembly, at some solemn feast, or other great occasion, or whether he went from city to city, and from tribe to tribe, preaching to this purpose, is not certain; but his errand was to convince them of sin, that in their crying to the Lord, they might confess that with sorrow and shame, and not spend their breath only in complaining of their trouble. They cried to God for a deliverer, and God sent them a prophet to instruct them, and to make them ready for deliverance. Note, (1.) We have reason to hope God is designing mercy for us, if we find he is by his grace preparing us for it. If to those that are sick he sends a messenger, an interpreter, by whom he shews unto man his uprightness, then he is gracious, and grants a recovery, Job. xxxiii. 23, 24. (2.) The sending of prophets to a people, and the furnishing of a land with faithful ministers, is a token for good, and an evidence that God has mercy in store for them. He thus turns us to him, and then causeth his face to shine, Psal. lxxx. 19.

We have here the heads of the message which this prophet delivered in to Israel, in the name of the Lord.

1. He sets before them the great things God had done for them, ver. 8, 9. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel; they had worshipped the gods of the nations, as if they had had no God of their own to worship, and therefore might choose whom they pleased; but they are here minded of one whom they had forgotten, who was known by the title of God of Israel, and to him they must return. They had turned to other gods as if their own had been either incapable or unwilling to protect them, and therefore they are told what he did for their fathers, in whose veins they were, the benefit of which descended and still remained to this their ungrateful seed. (1.) He brought them out of Egypt, where otherwise they had continued in perpetual poverty and slavery. (2.) He delivered them out of the hands of all that oppressed them; this is mentioned to intimate that the reason why they were not now delivered out of the hands of the oppressing Midianites, was, not for want of any power or good-will in God, but because by their iniquity they had sold themselves, and God would not redeem them until they by repentance revoked the bargain. (3.) He put them in quiet possession of this good land; this not only aggravated their sins and affixed the brand of base ingratitude to it, but justified God, and cleared him from blame upon the account of the trouble they were now in, they could not say he was unkind, for he had given all possible proofs of his designing well for them; if ill befel them notwithstanding, they must thank themselves.

2. He shews the easiness and equity of God's demands and expectations from them, ver. 10. I am the Lord your God, to whom you lie under the highest obligations, fear not the gods of the Amorites, i. e. do not worship them, nor shew any respect to them; do not worship them for fear of their doing you any hurt, for what hurt can they do you while I am your God; fear God, and you need not fear them.

3. He charges them with rebellion against God, who had laid this injunction upon them; but ye have not obeyed my voice. The charge is short, but very comprehensive; this was the malignity of all their sin, it was disobedience to God; and therefore it was it that brought these calamities upon them, under which they were now groaning, pursuant to the threatenings annexed to those commands. He intends hereby to bring them to repentance, and our repentance is then right and genuine, when the sinfulness of sin, as disobedience to God, is that in which we chiefly lament.

11. ¶ And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abi-ezrite: and his son Gilead threshed wheat by the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites. 12. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour, 13. And Gideon said unto him, Oh my lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us,

us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. 14. And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? 15. And he said unto him, Oh my lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. 16. And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites, as one man. 17. And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me. 18. Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again. 19. And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it. 20. And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock; and pour out the broth. And he did so. 21. ¶ Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh, and the unleavened cakes: and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes: then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight. 22. And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the LORD Gideon said, Alas, O LORD God! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face. 23. And the LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee, fear not, thou shalt not die. 24. Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

It is not said what effect the prophet's sermon had upon the people, but we may hope it had a good effect, and that some of them at least repented and reformed upon it: for here immediately after, we have the drawing of the day of their deliverance, by the effectual calling of Gideon to take upon him the command of their forces against the Midianites.

1. The person to be commissioned for this service was Gideon, the son of Joash, *ver. 11*. The father was now living, but he was passed by, and this honour put upon his son, for the father kept up in his own family the worship of Baal, *ver. 25*, which we may suppose this son, as far as was in his power, witnessed against. He was of the half-tribe of Manasseh that lay in Canaan, of the family of Abiezer, the eldest house of that tribe, *Josh. xvii. 2*. Hitherto the Judges were raised up out of that tribe which suffered most by the oppression, and probably it was so here.

2. The person that gave him the commission, was an angel of the Lord; it should seem not a created angel, but the Son of God himself, the eternal word, the Lord of the angels, who then appeared upon some great occasion in human shape, as a prelude (saith the learned Bishop Patrick) to what he intended in the fulness of time, when he would take our nature upon him, as we say, for good and all. This angel is here called Jehovah, the incommunicable name of God, *ver. 11—16*, and he saith, *I will be with thee*. This divine person appeared here to Gideon, and it is observable how he found him, (1.) Retired; all alone: God often manifests himself to his people, when they are out of the noise and hurry of this world. Silence and solitude befriend our communion with God. (2.) Employed in threshing wheat, with a staff or rod, (so the word signifies) such as they used in beating out tithes and cummin, *Ista. xxviii. 17*, but now used for wheat; probably, because he had but a little to thresh, he needed not the oxen to tread it out. It was not then looked upon as any diminution to him, though he was a person of some account, and a mighty man of valour, to lay his hand to the business of the husbandman. He had many servants, *ver. 27*, and yet would not himself live in idleness. We put ourselves in the way of divine visits, when we employ ourselves in honest business. Tidings of Christ's birth were brought to the shepherds, when they were keeping their flocks. The work he was about was an emblem of that greater work to which he was now to be called, as the disciples fishing was. From threshing corn he is fetched to thresh the Midianites, *Ista. xli. 15*. (3.) Distressed; he was threshing the wheat, not in the threshing-floor, the proper place, but by the wine-press, in some private unsuspected corner, for fear of the Midianites. He himself shared in the common calamity, and now the angel came to animate him against Midian, when he himself could speak so feelingly of the heaviness of their yoke. The day of the greatest distress is God's time to appear for his people's relief.

Let us now see what passed between the angel and Gideon, who knew not for a certain, till after he was gone, that he was an angel, but supposed he was a prophet.

1. The angel accosted him with respect, and assured him of the presence of God with him, *ver. 12*. He calls him a mighty man of valour, perhaps because he observed how he threshed his corn with all his might, and saith thou a man diligent in his business, whatever his business is, he shall stand before kings. He that is faithful in a few things, shall be ruler over many. Gideon was a man of a brave active spirit, and yet buried alive in obscurity, through the iniquity of the times: but is here animated to undertake something great, like himself, with that word, *the Lord is with thee*, or as the Chaldee reads it, *the Word of the Lord is thy help*. It was very sure the Lord was with him when this angel was with him. By this word, (1.) He gives him his commission. If we have God's presence with us, that will justify us, and bear us out in our undertakings. (2.) He inspires him with all necessary qualifications for the execution of his commission. The Lord is with thee to guide and strengthen thee, to animate and support thee. (3.) He assures him of success; for *if God be for us, who can prevail against us?* If he be with us, nothing can be wanting to us? The presence of God with us is all in all to our prosperity, whatever we do. Gideon was a mighty man of valour, and yet he could bring nothing to pass without the presence of God, and that presence is enough to make any man mighty in valour, and to give a man courage at any time.

2. Gideon gave a very melancholy answer to this joyful salutation, *ver. 13*. *O my Lord, if the Lord be with us* (which the Chaldee reads, *Is the Shechinah of the Lord our help?* making that the same with the word of the Lord)

why then is all this befallen us? All this trouble and distress from the Midianites incursions, which forces me to thresh wheat here by the wine-press; all this loss, and grief, and fright? and where are all the miracles which our fathers told us of? Observe, In his reply he regards not the praise of his own valour, nor doth that in the least elevate him, or give him any encouragement: though it is probable the angel adapted what he said to that which Gideon was at the same time thinking of; while his laborious hands were employed about his wheat, his working head and daring heart were meditating Israel's rescue and Midian's ruin, with which thought, he that knows the heart seasonably sets in, calls him a man of valour for his brave projects, and opens him a way to put them in execution; yet Gideon, as if not conscious to himself of any thing great or encouraging in his own spirit, fastens only on the assurance the angel had given him of God's presence, as that by which they held all their comfort. Observe, The angel speaks in particular to him, *the Lord is with thee*, but he expostulates for all, *if the Lord be with us*, herding himself with the thousands of Israel, and admits no comfort but what they might be sharers in, so far is he from the thoughts of monopolizing it, though he had so fair an occasion given him. Note, Public spirits reckon that only an honour and joy to themselves, which puts them in a capacity of serving the common interests of God's Church.

Gideon was a mighty man of valour, but as yet weak in faith, which makes it hard to him to reconcile to the assurances now given him of the presence of God, (1.) The distress to which Israel was reduced. Why is all this (and all this was no little) befallen us? Note, It is sometimes hard, but never impossible to reconcile cross providences with the presence of God and his favour. (1.) The delay of their deliverance, where all the miracles which our fathers told us of? Why doth not the same power which delivered our fathers from under the yoke of the Egyptians, deliver us out of the hands of the Midianites? As if because God did not presently work miracles for their deliverance, though they had by their sins forfeited his favour and help, it must be questioned, whether ever he had wrought the miracles which their fathers told them of, or if he had, whether he had now the same wisdom and power, and good-will to his people that he had had formerly. This was his weakness. We must not expect that the miracles which were wrought when a Church was in the forming, and some great truth in the settling, should be continued and repeated when the formation and settlement are completed. No, nor that the mercies God shewed to our fathers that served him, and kept close to him, should be renewed to us, if we degenerate and revolt from him. Gideon ought not to have said, either, (1.) That God had delivered them into the hand of the Midianites, for by their iniquities they had sold themselves. Or, (2.) That now they were in their hands he had forsaken them, for he had lately sent them a prophet, *ver. 8*, which was a certain indication that he had not forsaken them.

3. The angel gave him a very effectual answer to his objections, by giving him a commission to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Midianites, and assuring him of success therein, *ver. 14*. Now the angel is called Jehovah, for he speaks as one having authority, and not as a messenger. (1.) There was something extraordinary in the look he now gave to Gideon; it was a gracious favourable look, which revived his spirits that drooped, and silenced his fears, such a look as that, with which God's countenance beheld the upright, *Psalm. xi. 7*. He looked upon him, and smiled at the objections he made, which he gave him no direct answer to, but girt and clothed him with such power as would shortly enable him to answer them himself, and make him ashamed that ever he had made them. It was a speaking look, like Christ's upon Peter, *Luke xxii. 61*, a powerful look, a look that strongly darted new light and life into Gideon's breast, and inspired him with a generous heat, far above what before he felt. (2.) But much more was there in what he said to him. 1. He commissioned him to appear and act as Israel's deliverer. Such a one the few thinking people in the nation, and Gideon among the rest, were now expecting to be raised up, according to God's former method in answer to the cries of oppressed Israel; and now Gideon is told, thou art the man: *Go in this thy might*; this might, wherewith thou art now threshing wheat, go and employ it to a nobler purpose, *I will make thee a thresher of men*. Or rather, this might wherewith thou art now endued by this look, God gave him his commission, by giving him all the qualifications that were necessary for the execution of it, which is more than the mightiest prince and potentate on earth can do for those to whom he gives commissions. God's fitting men for work, is a sure and constant evidence of his calling them to it. Go, not in thy might, that which is natural, and of thyself, depend not on thine own valour, but go in this thy might, this which thou hast now received, *go in the strength of the Lord God*; this is the strength that which thou must strengthen thyself. 2. He assured him of success; this was enough to put courage into him, he might be confident he should not miscarry in the attempt; it should not turn either to his own disgrace, or the damage of his people, as baffled enterprizes do, but to his honour and their happiness; *thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites*, and so shalt not only be an eye-witness, but a glorious instrument of such wonders as thy fathers told thee of. Gideon, we may suppose, looked as one astonished at this strange and surprizing power conferred upon him, and questioned whether he may depend upon what he hears; the angel ratifies his commission with a *teste meipso*; there needed no more. *Have not I commanded thee?* I that have all power in heaven and earth, and particular authority here as Israel's king, giving commissions immediately. *I who am that I am*, the same that sent Moses, *Exod. iii. 14*.

4. Gideon made a very modest objection against this commission, *ver. 15*. *O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel?* This question speaks him either, 1. Distrustful of God and his power. As if though God should be with him, yet it were impossible for him to save Israel. True faith is often weak, yet it shall not be rejected, but encouraged and strengthened. 2. Inquisitive concerning the methods he must take; Lord, I labour under all imaginable disadvantages for it; if I must do it, thou must put me in the way. Note, Those who receive commissions from God, must expect and seek for instructions from him. Or rather, 3. Humble, self-diffident, and self-denying. The angel had honoured him, but see how meanly he speaks of himself, my family is comparatively poor in Manasseh, impoverished, it may be, more than other families by the Midianites, and am the least, that have the least honour and interest in my father's house; what can I pretend to do? I am utterly unfit for the service, and unworthy of the honour: Note, God often chooseth to do great things by those that are little, especially that are so in their own eyes. God delights to advance the humble.

5. This objection was soon answered by a repetition of the promise, that God would be with him, *ver. 16*. Object not thy poverty and meanness, that hath indeed often balked men in great enterprizes, but what is that to a man that has the presence of God with him, which will make up all the deficiencies of honour and estate. *Surely I will be with thee*, to direct and strengthen thee, and put such a reputation upon thee, that how weak soever thy personal interest is, thou shalt have soldiers enough to follow

follow thee, and be assured *thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man*, as easily as if they were but one man, and as effectually. All the thousands of Midian shall be as if they had but one neck, and thou shalt have the cutting of it off.

6. Gideon desires to have his faith confirmed, touching this commission; for he would not be over credulous of that which tended so much to his own praise, would not venture upon an undertaking so far above him, and in which he must engage many more; but he would be well satisfied himself of his authority, and would be able to give satisfaction to others who gave him that authority. He therefore humbly begs of this divine person, whoever he was,

1. That he would *give him a sign*, ver. 17. And the commission being given him out of the common road of providence, he might reasonably expect it should be confirmed by some act of God, out of the common course of nature. Shew me a sign to assure me of the truth of this concerning which thou talkest with me, that it is something more than talk, and that thou art in earnest. Now under the dispensation of the Spirit, we are not to expect signs before our eyes, such as Gideon here desired, but must earnestly pray to God, that if *we have found grace in his sight*, he would shew us a sign in our heart, by the powerful operations of his spirit there, *fulfilling the work of faith*, and perfecting what is lacking in it.

2. In order hereunto that he would accept of a treat, and so give him a farther and longer opportunity of conversation with him, ver. 18. Those who know what it is to have communion with God desire the continuance of it, and are loth to part, praying with Gideon, *depart not hence, I pray thee*. That which Gideon designs by courting his stay, was, that he might bring out some provision of meat for this stranger; he did not take him into the house to entertain him there, either because his father's house were not well affected to him and his friends, or because he desired still to be in private with this stranger, and to converse with him alone, therefore calls not for a servant to bring the provision, but fetcheth it himself; or because thus his father Abraham entertained angels unawares, not in his tent, but under a tree, Gen. xviii. 8. Upon the angel's promise to stay dinner with him, he hastened to bring out a kid, which, it is likely, was ready boiled for his own dinner, so that in making it ready, he had nothing to do but to put it in the basket (for here was no sauce to serve it up in, nor the dish garnished) and the broth in a vessel, and so he presented it, ver. 19. Hereby he intended, (1.) To testify his grateful and generous respects to this stranger, and in him to God who sent him, as one that studied what he should render. He had pleaded the poverty of his family, ver. 15. to excuse himself from being a general, but not here to excuse himself from being hospitable. Out of the little which the Midianites had left him, he would gladly spare enough to entertain a friend, especially a messenger from heaven. (2.) To try who, and what this extraordinary person was. What he brought out is called his present, ver. 18. It is the same word that is used for a meat-offering, and perhaps that word is used, which signifies both, because Gideon intended to leave it to this divine person to determine which it should be, when he had it before him, whether a feast, or a meat-offering, and accordingly he would be able to judge concerning him; if he eat of it as common meat, he would suppose him to be a man, a prophet; if otherwise, as it proved, he should know him to be an angel.

7. The angel gives him a sign, in and by that which he had kindly prepared for his entertainment. For what we offer to God for his glory, and in token of our gratitude to him, will be made by the grace of God to turn to our own comfort and satisfaction. The angel offered him to take the flesh and bread out of the basket, and lay it upon a hard and cold rock, and to pour out the broth upon it, which, if he brought it hot, would soon be cold there; and Gideon did so, ver. 20. believing that the angel appointed it, not in contempt of his courtesy, but with an intention to give him a sign, which he did abundantly to his satisfaction. For, 1. He turned the meat into an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto himself; shewing hereby that he was not a man who needed meat, but the Son of God who was to be served and honoured by sacrifice, and who in the fullness of time was to make himself a sacrifice. 2. He brought fire out of the rock to consume this sacrifice, summoning it, not by striking the rock, as we strike fire out of a flint, but by a gentle touch given to the offering with the end of his staff, ver. 21. Hereby he gave him a sign, that he had found grace in his sight, for God testifieth his acceptance of sacrifices by kindling them, if public, with fire from heaven, as those of Moses and Elias; if private as this, with fire out of the earth, which was equivalent, both were the products of divine power; and this acceptance of his sacrifice evidenced the acceptance of his person, confirmed his commission, and perhaps was intended to signify his success in the execution of it, that he and his army should be a surprizing terror and consumption to the Midianites, like this fire out of the rock. 3. He departed out of his sight immediately; did not walk off as a man, but vanished and disappeared as a spirit. Here was as much of a sign as he could wish.

8. Gideon, though no doubt he was confirmed in his faith, by the indications given of the divinity of the person who had spoken to him, yet for the present was put into a great fright by it, till God graciously pacified him and removed his fears. (1.) Gideon speaks peril to himself, ver. 22. *When he perceived that he was an angel*, which was not till he was departed, as the two disciples knew not it was Jesus they had been talking with, till he was going, Luke xxiv. 31. Then he cried out, *Alas! O Lord God, God be merciful to me, I am undone*, for *I have seen an angel*, as Jacob, who admired that his life was preserved when he had seen God, Gen. xxxii. 30. Ever since man has by sin exposed himself to God's wrath and curse, an express from heaven has been a terror to him, knowing he can expect no good tidings thence; at least in this world of sense, it is a very awful thing to have any sensible conversation with that world of spirits to which we are so much strangers. Gideon's courage failed him now. (2.) God speaks peace to him, ver. 23. It might have been fatal to him, but he assures him it should not. The Lord was departed out of his sight, ver. 21. But though he must no longer walk by sight, he might still live by faith, that faith which comes by hearing; for the Lord said to him, with an audible voice, as Bishop Patrick thinks, these encouraging words, *peace be unto thee*, all is well, and be thou satisfied that it is so; fear not, he that came to employ thee, did not intend to slay thee, *thou shalt not die*. See how ready God is to revive the hearts of those that tremble at his word and presence, and to give them assurance of his mercy that stand in awe of his majesty.

Lastly, the memorial of this vision which Gideon set up, was a monument in form of an altar, the rather, because it was by a kind of sacrifice upon a rock, without the solemnity of an altar, that the angel manifested his acceptance of him; that it needed not, the angel's staff was sufficient to sanctify the gift without the altar. But now it was of use to preserve the remembrance of it, which was done by the name it gave to it, *Jehovah-shalom*, ver. 24. *The Lord peace*. This is, (1.) The title of the Lord that spake to him, compare Gen. xvi. 13. The same that is the Lord our righteousness, is our peace, Eph. ii. 14. Our reconciler, and so our saviour. Or, (2.) The substance of what he said to him, *the Lord spake peace*, and created that fruit of the lips, bid me be easy when I was in that mighty toils, No. XXXVII.

Or, (3.) A prayer grounded upon what he had said, so the margin understands it, *the Lord sent peace*, i. e. rest from the present trouble, for still the public welfare lay nearest his heart.

25. ¶ And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it: 26. And build an altar unto the LORD thy God, upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt-sacrifice with the wood of the grove, which thou shalt cut down. 27. Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: And so it was because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night. 28. ¶ And when the men of the city rose early in the morning, behold the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built. 29. And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing. 30. Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it. 31. And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death while it is yet morning: if he be a god let him plead for himself, because one hath cut down his altar. 32. Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar.

Here, 1. Orders are given to Gideon to begin his government with the reformation of his father's house, ver. 25, 26. A correspondence being settled between God and Gideon, by the appearance of the angel to him, it was kept up in another way, the same night after he had seen God, when he was full of thoughts concerning what had passed, which probably he had not yet communicated to any, *the Lord said unto him in a dream, do so and so*. Note, God's visits, if gratefully received, shall be graciously repeated. Bid God welcome, and he will come again. Gideon is appointed, (1.) To throw down Baal's altar, which it seems his father had, either for his own house, or perhaps for the whole town. See the power of God's grace that he could raise up a reformer, and the condescensions of his grace, that he would raise up a deliverer out of the family of one that was a ringleader in idolatry. But Gideon must now not think it enough not to worship at that altar, which we charitably hope he had not done, but he must throw it down; nor consecrate the same altar to God, (it is Bishop Hall's observation) but utterly demolish it; God first commands down the monuments of superstition, and then enjoins his own service. He must likewise cut down the grove that was by it, the plantation of young trees, designed to beautify the place. The learned Bishop Patrick, by the grove, understands the image in the grove, probably the image of Ashteroth (for the word for a grove is *Ashteroth*) which stood upon, or close by the altar. (2.) To erect an altar to God, to *Jehovah his God*; which probably was to be notified by an inscription upon the altar to that purpose; To *Jehovah*, Gideon's God, or Israel's. It had been an ill thing for him to have built an altar, even to the God of Israel, especially for burnt-offering and sacrifice, and would have been construed a contempt of the altar at Shiloh, if God had not bid him do it, who has not tied up himself to his own laws. But now it was his duty, and an honour to be thus employed. God directs him to the place where he should build it, on the top of the rock, perhaps at the same place in which the angel had appeared to him, near to the altar he had already built: and he must not do it in a hurry, but with the decency that became a religious action, in an orderly manner, as it is in the margin, according to the ancient law for extempore altars, that they must be of earth, not of hewn stone. The word here used for the rock on which the altar was to be built, signifies a fortress, or strong hold, some think erected to secure them from the Midianites; if so, it was no security while the altar of Baal was so near it, but it was effectually fortified when an altar to the Lord was built on the top of it, for that is the best defence upon our glory. On this altar, 1. He was to offer sacrifice. Two bullocks he must offer: his father's young bullock, and the second bullock of seven years old; so it should rather be read, not even the second as we read it. The former we may suppose he was to offer for himself, the latter for the sins of the people, whom he was to deliver. It was requisite he should thus make peace with God, before he made war on Midian. Till sin be pardoned through the great sacrifice, no good is to be expected. These bullocks, it is supposed, were intended for sacrifices on the altar of Baal, but were now converted to a better use. Thus when the strong man armed is overcome and dispossessed, the stronger than he divides the spoil; seizeth that for himself, which they prepared for Baal; let him come whose right it is, and give it him. 2. Baal's grove or image, or whatever it was, that was the sanctity or beauty of this altar, must not be burnt, but must be used as fuel for God's altar, to signify, that whatever sets up itself in opposition to God, shall not only be destroyed, but the justice of God will be glorified in its destruction. God ordered Gideon to do this, (1.) To try his zeal for religion, which it was necessary he should give proofs of before he took the field, to give proofs of his valour there. (2.) That some steps might thereby be taken towards Israel's reformation, which must prepare the way for their deliverance. Sin, the cause, must be taken away, else how should the trouble come to an end, which was but the effect? And it might be hoped that this example of Gideon's, who was now shortly to appear so great a man, would be followed by the rest of the cities and tribes, and the destruction of this one altar of Baal would be the destruction of many.

2. Gideon was obedient to the heavenly vision, ver. 27. He that was to command the Israel of God, must be subject to the God of Israel, without disputing; and as a type of Christ, must first save his people from their sins, and then save them from their enemies. (1.) He had servants of his own, whom he could confide in, who, we may suppose, like him had kept their integrity.

integrity, and had not bowed the knee to Baal, and therefore was forward to assist him in destroying the altar of Baal. (2.) He did not scruple taking his father's bullock, and offering him to God without his father's consent, because God, who expressly commanded him to do so, had a better title to it than his father had, and was the greatest real kindness he could do to his father to prevent his sin. (3.) He expected to incur the displeasure of his father's household by it, and the ill-will of his neighbours, yet he did it, remembering how much it was Levi's praise, that, in the cause of God, *He said to his father and mother, I have not seen him*, Deut. xxxiii. 9. And while he was sure of the favour of God, he feared not the anger of men; he that bid him do it, would bear him out. Yet, (4.) Though he feared not their resentments when it was done, to prevent their resistance in the doing of it, he purely chose to do it by night, that he might not be disturbed in the sacred actions. And some think it was the same night in which God spake to him to do it; and that as soon as ever he had received the orders, he immediately applied himself to the execution of them, and finished before morning.

3. He was brought into peril of his life for doing it, ver. 28, 29, 30. (1.) It was soon discovered what was done. Gideon, when he had gone through with the business, did not desire the concealment of it, nor could it be hid, for the men of the city rose early in the morning, as it should seem, to lay their matins at Baal's altar, and so to begin the day with their god, such a one as he was; a shame to those, who say the true God is their God, and yet, in the morning, direct no prayer to him, nor look up. (2.) It was soon discovered who had done it. Strict enquiry was made: Gideon was known to be disaffected to the worship of Baal, which brought him into suspicion, and positive proof presently came against him, Gideon, no doubt, *has done this thing*. (3.) Being found guilty of the fact, to such a pitch of impiety were these degenerated Israelites arrived, that they take it for law that he must die for the same: and require his own father (who by patronizing their idolatry, had given them too much cause to expect he would comply with them herein) to deliver him up. *Bring out thy son, that he may die*. Astonished, O heavens, at this, and tremble, O earth! By the law of God, the worshippers of Baal were to die, but these wicked men impiously turn the penalty upon the worshippers of the God of Israel. How prodigiously mad were they upon their idols! was it not enough to offer the choicest of their bullocks to Baal, but must the bravest young gentleman of their city fall as a sacrifice to that dunghill-deity, when they pretended he was provoked? How soon will idolaters become persecutors?

4. He was rescued out of the hands of his persecutors by his own father, ver. 31. (1.) There were those that stood against Gideon, not only appeared at the first to make a demand, but insisted on it, and would have him put to death. Notwithstanding the heavy judgments they were at this time under for their idolatry, yet they hated to be reformed, and walked contrary to God then when he was walking contrary to them. (2.) Yet then *Joash stood for him*, he was one of the chief men of the city; those that have power may do a great deal for the protection of an honest man and an honest cause, and when they so use their power, they are ministers of God for good. This Joash had patronized Baal's altar, yet now protects him that had destroyed it, either, (1.) Out of natural affection to his son, and perhaps a particular esteem for him, as a virtuous, valiant, valuable young man, and never the worse for not joining with him in the worship of Baal. Many that have not courage enough to keep their integrity themselves, yet have so much conscience left, as makes them love and esteem those that do. If Joash had a kindness for Baal, yet he had a greater kindness for his son. Or, (2.) Out of a care for the public peace. The mob grew riotous, and he feared would grow more so, and therefore, as some think, he beset himself to repress the tumult; let it be left to the judges, it is not for you to pass sentence upon any man, he that offers it, *let him be put to death*; he means not as an idolater, but as a perturbator of the peace, and the mover of sedition. Under this same colour, Paul was rescued at Ephesus, from those that were as zealous for Diana as these here for Baal, Acts xix. 40. Or, (3.) Out of a conviction that Gideon had done well. His son perhaps had reasoned with him, or God, who has all hearts in his hands, had secretly and effectually influenced him to appear thus against the advocates for Baal, though he had complied with them formerly in the worship of Baal. Note, It is good to appear for God when we are called to it, though there be few or none to second us, because God can incline the hearts of those to stand by us, from whom we little expect it. Let us do our duty, and then trust God with our safety. Two things Joash urged; (1.) That it was absurd for them to plead for Baal. Will you that are Israelites, the worshippers of the one only living and true God, plead for Baal, a false god? Will you be so foolish, so senseless? They whose fathers god Baal was, and that never knew any other, are more excusable in pleading for him than you are, that are in covenant with Jehovah, and have been trained up in the knowledge of him. You that have smarted so much for worshipping Baal, and have brought all this mischief and calamity upon yourselves by it, will you yet plead for Baal? Note, It is bad to commit sin, but it is great wickedness indeed to plead for it, especially to plead for Baal, that idol, whatever it is which possesseth that room in the heart which God should have. (2.) That it was needless for them to plead for Baal; if he were not a God, as was pretended, they could have nothing to say for him, if he were, he was able to plead for himself, as the God of Israel had often done by fire from heaven, or some other judgment against those who put contempt upon him. Here is a fair challenge to Baal, *to do either good or evil*, and the result convinced his worshippers of their folly, in praying to one to help them that could not avenge himself; after this Gideon remarkably prospered, and thereby it appeared how unable Baal was to maintain his own cause. Lastly, Gideon's father hereupon gave him a new name, ver. 32. he called him Jerubbaal, let Baal plead, let him plead against him, if he can; if he have any thing to say for himself against his destroyer, let him say it. This name was a standing defiance to Baal; now Gideon was taking up arms against the Midianites that worshipped Baal, let him defend his worshippers if he can; it likewise gave honour to Gideon, a sworn enemy to that great usurper, and that had carried the day against him; and encouragement to his soldiers, that they fought under one that fought for God, against that great competitor with him for the throne. It is the probable conjecture of the learned, that that Jerombalus, whom Sanchoiathion (one of the most ancient of all the heathen writers) speaks of as a priest of the god Jao, (a corruption of the name Jehovah) and one to whom he was indebted for a great deal of knowledge, was this Jerubbaal. He is called Jerubbetheth, 2 Sam. xi. 21. Baal, a lord, being fitly turned into Betheth, shame.

33. ¶ Then all the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel. 34. But the spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, and Abiezer was gathered after him. 35. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh,

who also was gathered after him, and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali, and they came up to meet them. 36. ¶ And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, 37. Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor: and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. 38. And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. 39. And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be against me, and I will speak but this once: Let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. 40. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.

Here is, 1. The descent which the enemies of Israel made upon them, ver. 33. A vast number of Midianites, Amalekites, and Arabians, got together, and came over Jordan, none either caring or daring, to guard that important and advantageous pass against them, and they made their headquarters in the valley of Jezreel, in the heart of Manasseh's tribe, not far from Gideon's city. Some think the notice they had of Gideon's destroying Baal's altar brought them over, and that they came to plead for Baal, and to make that a pretence of quarreling with Israel; but it is more likely that it was now harvest-time, when they had been wont each year to make them such a visit as this, ver. 3. and were expected when Gideon was threshing, ver. 11. God raised up Gideon to be ready against this terrible blow came. Their success so many years in these incursions, the little opposition they had met with, and the great booty they had carried off, made them now both very eager, and very confident, but it proved the measure of their iniquity was full, the year of recompence was come, they must now make an end to spoil, and must be spoiled, and they are gathered as sheaves to the floor, Mich. iv. 12, 13. for Gideon to thresh.

2. The preparations which Gideon makes to attack them in their camp, ver. 34, 35. (1.) God by his spirit put life into Gideon, *the spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon*, so the word is, clothed him as a robe to put honour upon him; clothed him as a coat of mail, to put a defence upon him. Those are well clad that are thus clothed. *A spirit of fortitude from before the Lord clothed Gideon*; so the Chaldee. He was of himself a mighty man of valour, yet personal strength and courage, though vigorously exerted, would not suffice for this great action; he must have the armour of God upon him, and that is it that he must depend upon, *the spirit of the Lord clothed him* in an extraordinary manner; whom God calls to his work he will spirit for it. (2.) Gideon with his trumpet put life into his neighbours, God working with him; he blew a trumpet, to call in volunteers, and more came in than perhaps he expected. 1. The men of Abiezer, though lately enraged against him for throwing down the altar of Baal, and condemning him to death as a criminal, were now convinced of their error, bravely came in to his assistance, and submitted to him as their general; *Abiezer was gathered after him*, ver. 34. So suddenly can God turn the hearts, even of idolaters and persecutors. 2. Distant tribes, even Asher and Naphtali, which lay most remote, though strangers to him, obeyed his summons, and sent him in the best of their forces, ver. 35. Though they lay farthest from the danger, yet considering, that if their neighbours were over-run by the Midianites, their own turn would be next, they were forward to join against a common enemy.

3. The signs which God gratified him with, for the confirming both of his own faith and of his followers, and perhaps it was more for their sakes than for his own that he desired them. Or, perhaps he desired by these to be satisfied, whether this was the time of his conquering the Midianites, or whether he was to wait some other opportunity. Observe, 1. His request for a sign, ver. 36, 37. Let me by this know that thou wilt save Israel by my hand, let a fleece of wool spread in the open air, be wet with the dew, and let the ground about it be dry. The purport of this is, *Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief*. He found his own faith weak and wavering, and therefore begged of God by this sign to perfect what was lacking in it. We may suppose God, who intended to give him these signs, for the glorifying of his own power and goodness, put it into his heart to ask them. Yet when he repeated his request for a second sign, the reverse of the former, he did it with a very humble apology, deprecating God's displeasure, because it looked so like a peevish humourous distrust of God, and dissatisfaction with the many assurances he had already given him, ver. 39. *Let not thine anger be hot against me*. Though he took the boldness to ask another sign, yet he did it with such fear and trembling, as shewed the familiarity God had graciously admitted him to did not breed any contempt of God's glory, or presumption on God's goodness. Abraham had given him an example of this, when God gave him leave to be very free with him, Gen. xviii. 30, 32. *O let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak*. God's favour must be sought with great reverence, due sense of our distance, and a religious fear of his wrath. 2. God's gracious grant of his request. See how tender God is of true believers though they be weak, and how ready to condescend to their infirmities, that the bruised reed may not be broken, nor the smoking flax quenched. Gideon would have the fleece wet, and the ground dry; but then, lest any should object, it is natural for wool, if never so little moisture fall, to drink it in, and retain it, and therefore there was nothing extraordinary in that, though the quantity wrung out was sufficient to obviate that objection, yet he desires that next night the ground might be wet and the fleece dry, and it is done, is given, is God to give to the heirs of promise strong consolation, (Heb. vi. 17, 18.) even by two immutable things. He suffers himself, not only to be prevailed with by their importunities, but even to be prescribed to by their doubts and dissatisfactions.

These signs were, (1.) Truly miraculous, and therefore abundantly serving to confirm his commission. It is said of the dew, that it is *from the Lord*, and *tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men*, Micah v. 7. And yet God here in this matter, *hearkened to the voice of man*, as to Joshua, in directing the course of the sun, so to Gideon, in directing that of the dew, by which it appears, that it falls not by chance, but providence. The latter sign inverted the former, and to please Gideon, it was wrought backward and forward; whence Dr. Fuller observes, that *heaven's real miracles will endure turning, being inside and outside both alike*. (2.) Very significant. He and his men are going to engage the Midianites, could God distinguish between the small fleece of Israel and the vast floor of Midian? Yes, by this he is made to know that he can. Is Gideon desirous that the dew of divine grace

grace might descend upon himself in particular, he sees the fleece wet with the dew to assure him of it? Doth he desire that God will be as the dew to all Israel? Behold all the ground is wet. Some make this fleece an emblem of the Jewish nation, which, when time was, was wet with the dew of God's word and ordinances, while the rest of the world was dry. But since the rejection of Christ and his gospel, they are dry as the heath in the wilderness, while the nations about are as a watered garden.

C H A P. VII.

This chapter presents us with Gideon in the field, commanding the army of Israel, and routing the army of the Midianites, for which great exploit we found in the former chapter how he was prepared by his converse with God, and his conquest of Baal. We are here told, 1. What direction God gave to Gideon for the modelling of his army, by which it was reduced to three hundred men, ver. 1—8. 2. What encouragement God gave to Gideon to attack the enemy, by sending him incognito into their camp to hear a Midianite tell his dream, ver. 9—15. 3. How he formed his attack upon the enemy's camp with his three hundred men, not to fight them, but to frighten them, ver. 16—20. 4. The success of this attack, it put them to flight, and gave them a total rout, the disbanded forces, and other their neighbours, then coming in to his assistance, ver. 21—25. It is a story that shines very bright in the book of the wars of the Lord.

1. **T**HEN Jerubbaal (who is Gideon) and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north-side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. 2. And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. 3. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead: and there returned of the people twenty and two thousand, and there remained ten thousand. 4. And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many: bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. 5. So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth the water with his tongue as a dog lap-peth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. 6. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. 7. And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place. 8. So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all the rest of Israel, every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.

Here, 1. Gideon applies himself with all possible care and industry to do the part of a good general, in leading on the hosts of Israel against the Midianites, ver. 1. He rose up early, as one whose heart was upon his business, and who was afraid of losing time. Now he is sure God is with him, he is impatient of delay. He pitched near a famous well, that his army might not be distressed for the want of water, and gained the higher ground, which possibly might be some advantage to him, for the Midianites were beneath him in the valley. Note, Faith in God's promise must not slacken, but rather quicken our endeavours. When we are sure God goes before us, then we must bestir ourselves, 2 Sam. v. 24.

2. God provides that the praise of the intended victory may be reserved wholly to himself, by appointing three hundred men only to be employed in this service. The army consisted of thirty-two thousand men, a small army, in comparison with what Israel might have raised upon so great an occasion, and a very small one in comparison with what the Midianites had now brought into the field; Gideon was ready to think them too few, but God comes to him, and tells him they were too many, ver. 2. Not but that they did well, who offered themselves willingly to this expedition, but God thought fit not to make use of all that came. We often find God bringing great things to pass by a few hands, but this was the only time that he purposely made them fewer. Had Deborah lately blamed those who came not to the help of the Lord, and yet in the next great action must they be turned off that do come? Yes; 1. God would hereby shew, that when he employed likely instruments in his service, he did not need them, but could do his work without them. So that he was not indebted to them for their service, but they to him for employing them. 2. He would hereby put them to shame for their cowardice, who had tamely submitted to the Midianites, and durst not make head against them, because of the disproportion of their numbers: They now saw, if they had but made sure of the favour of God, one of them might have chased a thousand. 3. He would hereby silence and exclude boasting: that is the reason here given by him, who knows the pride that is in men's hearts, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me. Justly were they denied the honour of the service, who would not give God the honour of the success. Mine own hand has saved me, is a word that must never come out of the mouth of such as shall be saved. He that glories, must glory in the Lord, and all flesh must be silent before him.

Two ways God took to lessen their numbers.

1. He ordered all that would own themselves timorous and fainthearted to be dismissed, ver. 3. He was now encamped on a mountain close to the enemy, called mount Gilead, from Gilead, the common ancestor of these families of Manasseh, which were seated on this side Jordan, Numb. xxvi. 30. And from whence they might see perhaps the vast numbers of the enemy; those therefore who were disheartened at the sight, were left to their liberty to go back if they pleased. There was a law for making such a proclamation as this, Deut. xx. 8. But Gideon perhaps thought that concerned only those wars which were undertaken for the enlarging of their coast, not as this for their necessary defence against an invader, therefore Gideon had not proclaimed this, if God had not commanded him, who knew how his forces would hereby be diminished. Cowards would be as likely as any after the victory to take the honour of it from God, and therefore God would not do them the honour to employ them in it. One would have thought there had been scarce one Israelite to be found, that against such an enemy as the Midianites, and under such a leader as Gideon, would have owned himself fearful, yet above two parts of the three took the advantage of this proclamation, and filed off, when they saw the strength of the enemy and their own weakness, not considering the assurances of the divine presence which their general had received of the Lord, and it is likely delivered unto them. Some think the oppression they had been under so long had broke their spirits, others, more probably, that consciousness of their own guilt had deprived them of their courage. Sin stared them in the face, and therefore they durst not look death in the face. Note, Fearful, faint-hearted people are not fit to be employed for God, and among those that are listed under the banner of Christ, there are more such than we think there are.

2. He directed the cashiering of all that remained but three hundred men, and he did it by a sign. The people are yet too many for me to make use of, ver. 4. See how much God's thoughts and ways are above ours. Gideon himself, it is likely, thought they were quite too few; though they were as many as Barak encountered Sisera with, chap. iv. 14. and had he not forced his way through the discouragement by dint of faith, he himself would have started back from so hazardous an enterprise, and have made the best of his own way back: but God said they are too many, and when diminished to a third part, there are yet too many, which may help us to understand those providences which sometimes seem to weaken the Church and its interests: its friends are too many, too mighty, too wise, for God to work deliverance by, God is taking a course to lessen them, that he may be exalted in his own strength.

Gideon is ordered to bring his soldiers to the watering, probably to the well of Harod, ver. 1. and the stream that ran from it; he, or some appointed by him, must observe how they drank. We must suppose they were all thirsty, and had a mind to drink; it is likely he told them they must prepare to enter upon action presently, and therefore must refresh themselves accordingly, not expecting after this to drink any thing else but the blood of their enemies. Now, (1.) Some, and no doubt the most, would kneel down on their knees to drink, and put their mouths to the water as horses do, and so they might get their full draught. (2.) Others it may be would not make such a formal business of it, but as a dog laps with his tongue, a lap and away, so they would hastily take up a little water in their hands, and cool their mouths with that, and be gone. Three hundred and no more there were of this latter sort, that drank in haste, and by those God tells Gideon he would rout the Midianites, ver. 7. By the former distinction none were retained but hearty men, that were resolved to do their utmost for the retrieve of the liberties of Israel, but by this farther distinction it was provided that none should be made use of but, (1.) Men that were hardy, that could endure a long fatigue, without complaining of thirst or weariness, that had not in them any dregs either of sloth or luxury. (2.) Men that were hasty, and thought it long until they were engaged with the enemy, preferring the service of God and their country before their necessary refreshments, such as these God chooses to employ, that are not only well affected, but zealously affected in a good thing. And also because these were the fewer number, and therefore the least likely to affect what they were designed for, God would by them save Israel. It was a great trial to the faith and courage of Gideon, when God bid him let all the rest of the people but these three hundred, go every man to his place, i. e. go where he pleased out of his call, and from under his command: yet we may suppose those that were hearty in the cause, though now set aside, did not go so far out of hearing, but they were ready to follow the blow, when the three hundred had broke the ice; though that doth not appear.

Thus strangely was Gideon's army purged and modelled, and reduced, instead of being recruited, as one would think in so great an action it both needed and deserved to be. Now let us see how this little despicable regiment, on which the strels of the action must lie, were accounted, and fitted out. Had these three hundred been double manned with servants and attendants, and doubly armed with swords and spears, we should have thought them the more likely to bring something to pass. But instead of making them more serviceable by their equipment they are made less so. For, 1. Every soldier turned suiter, they took victuals in their hand, ver. 8. left their bag and baggage behind, and every man burdened himself with his own provision, which was a trial of their faith whether they could trust God, when they had no more provisions with them than they could carry, and a trial of their diligence, whether they could carry as much as they had occasion for. This was indeed living from hand to mouth. 2. Every soldier turns trumpeter. The regiments that were cashiered left their trumpets behind them for the use of those three hundred men, who were furnished with those instead of weapons of war, as if they had been going rather to game than to battle.

9. ¶ And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host, for I have delivered it into thine hand. 10. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host. 11. And thou shalt hear what they say, and afterwards shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host. 12. And the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and all the children of the east, lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea-side for multitude. 13. And when Gideon was come, behold there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and lo, a cake of barley-bread tumbled into the host

host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it; that the tent lay along. 14. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host. 15. ¶ And it was so when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned unto the host of Israel, and said, Arise, for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

Gideon's army being diminished as we have found it was, he must either fight by faith, or not at all; God therefore here provides recruits for his faith, instead of recruits for his forces.

1. He furnishes him with a good foundation to build his faith upon; nothing but a word from God will be footing for faith. He hath that as full and express as he can desire, ver. 9. A word of command to warrant the action, which otherwise seemed rash and indiscreet, and unbecoming a wife general; *Arise, get thee down with this handful of men unto the host*: and a word of promise to assure him of the success, which otherwise seemed very improbable; *I have delivered it into thine hand*, it is all thine own. This word of the Lord came to him the same night, when he was (we may suppose) full of care, and in a mighty toils how he should come off, in the multitude of his thoughts within him, these comforts did delight his soul. Divine consolations are given in to believers, not only strongly but seasonably.

2. He furnisheth him with a good prop to support his faith with. (1.) He orders him to be his own spy, and now in the dead of the night to go down privately into the host of Midian, and see what intelligence he could gain. *If thou fear to go down to fight, go first only with thine own servant*, ver. 10. and *hear what they say*, ver. 11. and it is intimated to him he should hear that which would be a great strengthening to his faith. God knows the infirmities of his people, and what great encouragement they may sometimes take from a small matter, and therefore knowing beforehand what would occur to Gideon, in that very part of the camp to which he would go down, he orders him to go down and hearken what they said, that he might the more firmly believe what God said. He must take with him *Phurah his servant*, one that he could confide in, probably one of the ten that had helped him to break down the altar of Baal; he must take him and no one else with him, must take him with him to be a witness of what he should hear the Midianites say, that out of the mouth of these two witnesses, when the matter came to be reported to Israel, the word might be established. He must take his servant with him, because two is better than one, and a little help better than none. (2.) Being so, he orders him the sight of something that was discouraging. It was enough to frighten him to discern, perhaps by moon-light, the vast numbers of the enemy, ver. 12. the men like grasshoppers for multitude, and they proved no better than grasshoppers for strength and courage; the camels one could not count no more than the sand. But, 2. he heard that which was to him a very good omen; and which when he had heard he went back again presently, supposing he now had what he was sent thither for. He overheard two soldiers of the enemy, that were comrades, talking, probably they were in bed together, waking in the night. (1.) One of them tells his dream, and (as our dreams generally are bad, and therefore not worth telling again) it was a very foolish one. He dreamed that he saw a barley-cake come hopping down the hill into the camp of the Midianites, and methought (said he, for so we use to tell our dreams) this tumbling cake struck one of our tents, (perhaps one of the chief of their tents) and with such violence that (would you think it!) it overturned the tent, forced down the stakes, and broke the cords at one blow, so that the tent lay along and buried its inhabitants, ver. 13. *In multitudes of dreams there are divers vanities*, faith Solomon, *Eccles. v. 7*. One would wonder what odd incoherent things are often put together by a ludicrous fancy in our dreams. (2.) The other, it may be, between sleep and wake, undertakes to interpret this dream, and the interpretation is very far fetched. *This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon*, ver. 14. Our expostors now can tell us how apt the resemblance was; that Gideon, who had threshed corn for his family, and made cakes for his friend, chap. vi. 11—19, was fitly represented by a cake: that he and his army were as inconceivable as a cake made of a little flour, as contemptible as a barley-cake hastily got together, as a cake suddenly baked upon the coals, and as unlikely to conquer this great army, as a cake to overthrow a tent. But after all, *do not interpretations belong to God?* He put it into the head of the one to dream, and into the mouth of the other to give the sense of it; if Gideon had heard the dream only, and he and his servant had been to interpret it themselves, it had so little significancy in it, that it would have done him little service, but having the interpretation from the mouth of an enemy, it not only appeared to come from God, who has all men's hearts and tongues in his hand, but it was likewise an evidence that the enemy was quite dispirited, and the name of Gideon was become so formidable to them, that it disturbed their sleep. The victory would easily be won, which was already so tamely yielded, *into his hand hath God delivered Midian*. Those were not likely to fight who saw God fighting against them.

Gideon observing the finger of God pointing him to that very place, at that very time, to hear this dream and the interpretation of it, was exceedingly encouraged by it against the melancholy apprehensions he had upon the reducing of his army. He was very well pleased to hear himself compared to a barley-cake, when it proved to effect such great things. Being hereby animated, we are told, ver. 15. (1.) How he gave God the glory of it, he worshipped immediately, bowed his head, or, it may be, lift up his eyes and hands, and in a short ejaculation thanked God for the victory he was now sure of, and for this encouragement to expect it. Wherever we are we may speak to God, and worship him, and find a way open heavenwards. God must have the praise of that which is encouraging to our faith. And his providence must be acknowledged in those events, which though minutely and seemingly accidental, prove serviceable to us. (2.) How he gave his friends a share in the encouragement he had received. *Arise, prepare to march presently, the Lord hath delivered Midian into your hand*.

16. And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. 17. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and behold when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that as I do, so shall ye do. 18. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of the camp, and say, *The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon*.

19. ¶ So Gideon, and the three hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp, in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch, and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. 20. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow *withal*: and they cried, *The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon*. 21. And they stood every man in his place, round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. 22. And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abel-meolah, unto Tabbath.

Here is, 1. The brave alarm which Gideon gave to the host of Midian in the dead time of the night, for it was intended that they which had so long been a terror to Israel, and had so often frightened them, should themselves be routed and ruined purely by terror. The attack here made was in divers circumstances like that which Abraham made upon the army that had taken Lot captive; the number of men much the same, Abraham had three hundred and eighteen, Gideon three hundred; they both divided their forces, both made their attack by night, and were both victorious under great disadvantages, *Gen. xiv. 14, 15*. and Gideon is not only a son of Abraham, (so were the Midianites by Keturah) but an heir of his faith. Gideon, (1.) divided his army, as small as it was, into three battalions, ver. 16. one of which he himself commanded, ver. 19. because great armies (and such a one he would make a shew of) use to be divided into the right wing, the left wing, and the body of the army. (2.) He ordered them all to do as he did, ver. 17. He told them now, it is very likely, what they must do, else the thing was so odd they would scarce have done it of a sudden, but he would by doing it first give notice to them when to do it, as officers exercise their soldiers with the word of command, or by beat of drum. *Look on me and do likewise*; such is the word of command our Lord Jesus, with a charge to follow it, *as I do so shall ye do*. (3.) He made his descent the night, when they were secure, and least expected it, which would put them into a mighty consternation; and when the smallness of his army would not be discovered; in the night all frights are most frightful; especially in the dead of the night, as this was, a little after midnight, when the middle watch began, and the alarm would wake them out of their sleep. We read of *terror by night*, as very terrible, *Psal. xci. 5*. and *fear in the night*, *Cant. iii. 8*. (4.) That which Gideon aimed at, was to frighten this huge host, to give them not only a fatal rout, but a very shameful one. He accoutred his army with every man a trumpet in his right hand, and an earthen pitcher with a torch in it in his left, and he himself thought it no disparagement to him, to march before them thus armed. He would make but a jest of conquering this army, and goes out against them rather as against a company of children than of soldiers. *The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn*, *Isa. xxxvii. 22*. The fewness of his men favoured his design, for being so few they marched to the camp with the greater secrecy and expedition; so that they were not discovered till they were close by the camp; and he contrived to give the alarm when they had newly mounted the guards, ver. 19. that the centinels being then wakeful, might the sooner disperse the alarm through the camp, which was the best service they could do him.

Three ways Gideon contrived to strike a terror upon this army, and so put them into confusion. 1. With a great noise, every man must blow his trumpet in the most terrible manner he could, and clatter an earthen pitcher to pieces at the same time; probably, each dashed his pitcher to his next man's, and so they were broken both together, which would not only make a great crash, but was a figure of what would be the effects of the fright, even the Midianites killing one another. 2. With a great blaze. The lighted torches were hid in the pitchers, like a *candle under a bushel*, until they come to the camp, and then being taken out all together of a sudden, would make a glaring shew, and run through the camp like a flash of lightning. Perhaps with these they set some of the tents on the outside of the camp on fire, which would very much increase the confusion. 3. With a great shout. Every man must cry, *For the Lord, and for Gideon*, so some think it should be read, ver. 18. for there the sword is not in the original, but it is, ver. 20. *The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon*. It should seem he borrowed the word from the Midianite's dream, ver. 14. it is the sword of Gideon; finding his name was a terror to them, he thus improves it against them; but prefixes the name of Jehovah, as the figure, without which his own was but an insignificant cypher. This would put life into his own men, who might well take courage, when they had such a God as Jehovah, and such a man as Gideon both to fight for, and fight for them; well might they follow who had such leaders. It would likewise put their enemies into a fright, who had of old heard of Jehovah's great name, and of late of Gideon's. The sword of the Lord is all in all to the success of the sword of Gideon, yet the sword of Gideon must be employed. Men the instruments, and God the principal agent, must both be considered in their places, but men, the greatest and best, always in subserviency and subordination to God. This army was to be defeated purely by terrors, and those are especially the sword of the Lord. These soldiers, if they had swords by their sides, that was all, they had none in their hands, but they gained the victory by shouting *The sword*; so the Church's enemies are routed by a sword out of the mouth, *Rev. xix. 21*.

Now this method here taken of defeating the Midianites may be alluded to, 1. As typifying the destruction of the devil's kingdom in the world, by the preaching of the everlasting Gospel, the sounding of that trumpet, and the holding forth of that light out of earthen vessels, for such the ministers of the gospel are, in whom the treasure of that light is deposited, *2 Cor. iv. 6, 7*. Thus God chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, a barley-cake to overthrow the tents of Midian, that the excellency of the power might be of God only; the Gospel is a sword, not in the hand, but in the mouth, the sword of the Lord and of Gideon; of God and Jesus Christ, him that sits on the throne and the Lamb. 2. As representing the terrors of the great day. So the excellent Bishop Hall applies it; if these pitchers, trumpets, and firebrands, did so daunt and dismay the proud troops of Midian and Amalek, who shall be able to stand before the last terror, when the trumpet of the archangel shall sound, the elements shall be on a flame, the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the Lord himself shall descend with a shout!

2. The wonderful success of this alarm. The Midianites were shouted out

out of their lives, as the walls of Jericho were shouted down, that Gideon might see what he lately despaired of ever seeing, the wonders that their fathers told them of. Gideon's soldiers observed their orders, and stood every man in his place round about the camp, ver. 21. sounding his trumpet to excite them to fight one another, and holding out his torch to light them to their ruin. They did not rush into the host of Midian, as greedy either of blood or spoil, but patiently stood still to see the fulfilment of the Lord, a salvation purely of his own working. Observe how the design took effect.

1. They feared the Israelites, all the host presently took the alarm, it flew like lightning through all their lines, and they ran, and cried, and fled, ver. 21. There was something natural in this fright; we may suppose they had not had intelligence of the great diminution of Gideon's army, but rather concluded that since their last advices it had been growing greater and greater; and therefore had reason to suspect, knowing how odious and grievous they had made themselves, and what bold steps they had taken towards the throwing off their yoke, that it was a very great army which was to be ushered in with all those trumpeters and torch-bearers; but there was more of a supernatural power impressing this terror upon them; God himself gave it the setting on, to shew how the promise should have been fulfilled if they had not forfeited it, *One of you shall chase a thousand.* See the power of imagination, and how much it may become a terror at some times, as other times it is a pleasure.

2. They fell foul upon one another, ver. 22. *The Lord sets every man's sword against his fellow.* In this confusion, observing the trumpeters and torch-bearers, to stand still without their camp, they concluded the body of the army had already entered, and was in their bowels, and therefore every one ran at the next he met, though a friend, supposing him an enemy, and one such mistake as that would occasion many, for then he that slew him would certainly be taken for an enemy, and would be dispatched presently. It is our interest to preserve such a command of our own spirits, as never to be afraid with any amazement, for we cannot conceive what mischiefs we thereby plunge ourselves in. See also how God often makes the enemies of his church instruments to destroy one another; it is a pity the Church's friends should ever be thus infatuated.

3. They fled for their lives. Perhaps when day-light came, they were sensible of their mistake in fighting with one another, and concluded that by this fatal error they had so weakened themselves, that now it was impossible to make any head against Israel, and therefore made the best of their way towards their own country, though for aught appears the three hundred men kept their ground. *The wicked flee when none pursues,* Prov. xxviii. 1. *Terrors make him afraid on every side, and drive him to his feet,* Job. xviii. 11.

23. And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites. 24. ¶ And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan. 25. And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the wine-press of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan.

We have here the prosecution of this glorious victory.

1. Gideon's soldiers that had been dismissed, and perhaps had begun to disperse themselves, upon notice of the enemies slight got together again, and vigorously pursued them whom they had not courage to face. The men of Israel out of Naphtali and Asher who did this, ver. 23. were not such as now came from those distant countries, but the same that had lifted themselves, chap. vi. 35. but had been cashiered. They who were fearful and afraid to fight, ver. 3. now took heart, when the worst was over, and were ready enough to divide the spoil, though backward to make the onset. They also that might not fight, though they had a mind to it, and were disbanded by order from God, did not as those, 2 Chron. xxv. 10—13, return in great anger, but waited for an opportunity of doing service in pursuing the victory, though they were denied the honour of helping to force the lines.

2. The Ephraimites, upon summons from Gideon, came in unanimously, and secured the passes over Jordan, by the several fords, to cut off the enemies retreat into their own country, that they might be utterly destroyed, to prevent the like mischief to Israel another time. Now they had begun to fall down with them, *Eph. vi. 13.* They took the waters, ver. 24. i. e. posted themselves along the river side, so that the Midianites, who fled from those who pursued them, fell into the hand of those that waited to intercept them. Here was fear, and the pit, and snare, Isa. xxiv. 17.

3. Two of the chief commanders of the host of Midian were taken and slain by the Ephraimites on this side Jordan, ver. 25. Their names perhaps signified their nature, Oreb signifies a raven, and Zeeb a wolf (*Corvinus* and *Lupus*.) These in their flight had taken shelter, one in a rock (*Isa. ii. 21.* *Rev. vi. 15.*) the other by a wine-press (as Gideon for fear of them had lately hid his corn in a wine-press, chap. vi. 11.) But the places of their shelter were made the places of their slaughter, and the memory of it preferred to posterity in the names of the places, to their perpetual infamy. *Here fell the princes of Midian.*

C H A P. VIII.

This chapter gives us a farther account of Gideon's victory over the Midianites, with the residue of the story of his life and government. (1.) Gideon prudently pacifieth the offended Ephraimites, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) He bravely pursues the flying Midianites, ver. 4, 10, 11, 12. (3.) He justly chastiseth the insolence of the men of Succoth and Peniel, who basely abused him, ver. 5—9. and were reckoned with for it, ver. 13—17. (4.) He honourably slays the two kings of Midian, ver. 18—21. (5.) After all this he modestly declines the government of Israel, ver. 22, 23. (6.) He foolishly gratified the superstitious humour of his people, by setting up an ephod in his own city, which proves a great snare, ver. 24, 27. (7.) He kept the country quiet forty years, ver. 28. (8.) He died in honour and left a numerous family behind him, ver. 29—32. (9.) Both he and his God were soon forgotten by ungrateful Israel, ver. 33, 35.

No. XXXVII.

1. AND the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? and they did chide with him sharply. 2. And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? 3. God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.

No sooner were the Midianites, the common enemy, subdued, but, through the violence of some hot spirits, the children of Israel are ready to quarrel among themselves; an unhappy spark was struck, which, if Gideon had not with a great deal of wisdom and grace extinguished presently, might have broke out into a flame of fatal consequence. The Ephraimites, when they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon as general, instead of congratulating his successes, and addressing him with thanks for his great services, as they ought to have done, picked a quarrel with him, and grew very hot upon it.

1. Their accusation was very peevish and unreasonable, *Why didst thou not call us when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites?* ver. 1. Ephraim was brother to Manasseh, Gideon's tribe, and had had the pre-eminence in Jacob's blessing, and in Moses's, and therefore was very jealous of Manasseh, lest that tribe should at any time eclipse the honours of theirs: Hence we find Manasseh against Ephraim, and Ephraim against Manasseh, *Isa. ix. 21.* *A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and their contentions are as the bars of a castle,* Prov. xvii. 19. But how unjust was their quarrel with Gideon? They were angry he did not send for them to begin the attack upon Midian, but only to follow the blow: Why were they not called to lead the van? The post of honour they thought belonged to them: But, 1. Gideon was called of God, and must act as he directed; he neither took the honour to himself, nor did he dispose of honours himself, but left it to God to do all. So that the Ephraimites in this quarrel reflected upon the divine conduct, and what was Gideon that they murmured against him? (2.) Why did not the Ephraimites offer themselves willingly to the service? They knew the enemy was in their country, and had heard of the forces that were raising to oppose them, to which they ought to have joined themselves in zeal for the common cause, though they had not a formal invitation. Those seek themselves more than God, that stand upon a point of honour to excuse themselves from doing real service to God and their generation. In Deborah's time there was a root of Ephraim, chap. v. 14. Why did not that appear now? The case itself called them, they needed not wait for a call from Gideon. (3.) Gideon had saved their credit in not calling them; if he had sent for them in, no doubt many of them would have gone back with the faint-hearted, or been dismissed with the lazy lubberly drinkers; so that by not calling them, he prevented the putting of those slurs upon them. Cowards will seem valiant when the danger is over, but those consult their reputation who try not their courage when danger is near.

2. Gideon's answer was very calm and peaceable, and was intended not so much to justify himself, as to please and pacify them, ver. 2, 3. He answers them, 1. With a great deal of meekness and temper, did not resent the affront, nor answer anger with anger, but mildly reasons the case with them, and he won as true honour by this command which he had over his own passion, as by his victory over the Midianites; *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty.* 2. With a great deal of modesty and humility, magnifying their performances above his own. *Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim, who picked up the stragglers of the enemy, and cut off those of them that escaped, better than the vintage of Abiezer?* a greater honour to them, and better service to the country than the first attack Gideon made upon them? The destruction of the Church's enemies is compared to a vintage, *Rev. xiv. 18.* In this he owns their gleanings better than his gatherings. The improving of a victory is often more honourable, and of greater consequence than the winning of it; in this they had signalized themselves, and their own courage and conduct, or rather God, had dignified them; for though to magnify their achievements, he is willing to diminish his own performances, yet he will not take any flowers from God's crown to adorn theirs with; *God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian,* and a great slaughter has been made of the enemy by your numerous hosts, and what was I able to do with three hundred men, in comparison of you and your brave exploits? Gideon stands here a very great example of self-denial, and the instance shews us, 1. That humility is the best way to put by envy. It is true, even right works are often envied, *Ecc. iv. 4.* Yet they are not apt to be so, when those who do them appear not to be proud of them. They are malignant indeed, who seek to cast those down from their excellency that humble and abase themselves. 2. It is likewise the surest method of ending strife, for only by pride comes contention, *Prov. xiii. 10.* 3. Humility is most amiable and admirable in the midst of great attainments and advancements: Gideon's conquests did greatly set off his condescensions. 4. It is the proper act of humility to esteem others better than ourselves, and in honour to prefer one another.

Now what was the issue of this controversy? The Ephraimites had chid with him sharply, ver. 1. forgetting the respect owing to their general; and one whom God had honoured, and giving vent to their passion in a very indecent liberty of speech, a certain sign of a weak and indefensible cause; reason runs low when the chiding flies high. But Gideon's just answer turned away their wrath, *Prov. xv. 1.* *Their anger was abated towards him,* ver. 3. It is intimated, that they retained some resentment, but he prudently overlooked it, and let it cool by degrees. Very great and good men must expect to have their patience tried, by the unkindnesses and follies even of those they serve, and must not think it strange.

4. ¶ And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them. 5. And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me, for they be faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian. 6. ¶ And the princes of Succoth said, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army? 7. And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with

with the thorns of the wilderness, and with briers. 8. And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered him. 9. And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower. 10. ¶ Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east: for their fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword. 11. ¶ And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents, on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure. 12. And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host. 13. ¶ And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun was up. 14. And caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and enquired of him, and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, even threescore and seventeen men. 15. And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold, Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me; saying, *Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand that we should give bread unto thy men that are weary?* 16. And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness, and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth. 17. And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city.

In these verses we have,

1. Gideon, as a valiant general, pursuing the remaining Midianites, and bravely following his blow. A very great slaughter was made of the enemy at first, *one hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword*, ver. 10. Such a terrible execution did they make among themselves, and so easy a prey were they to Israel: but it seems the two kings of Midian being better provided than the rest for an escape, with fifteen thousand men, got over Jordan before the passes could be procured by the Ephraimites, and made towards their own country: Gideon thinks he doth not fully execute his commission to save Israel, if he let them escape. He is not content to chase them out of the country, but he will *chase them out of the world*, Job xviii. 18. This generous design is here pushed on with great resolution, and crowned with great success.

(1.) His resolution was very exemplary, and he effected his purpose under the greatest disadvantages and discouragements that could be. (1.) He took none with him but this three hundred men, who now lay aside their trumpets and torches, and betook themselves to their swords and spears. God had said, *by these three hundred men will I save you*, chap. vii. 7. And confiding in that promise, Gideon kept to them only, ver. 4. He expected more from three hundred men, supported by a particular promise, than from so many thousands supported only by their own valour. (2.) They were faint, and yet pursuing, much fatigued with what they had done, and yet eager to do more against the enemies of their country. Our spiritual warfare must thus be prosecuted with what strength we have, though we have but little: it is many a time the true Christian's case, fainting and yet pursuing. (3.) Though he met with discouragement from those of his own people, was jeered for what he was doing, as going about what he could never accomplish, yet he went on with it. If those that should be our helpers in the way of our duty, prove hindrances to us, let not that drive us off from it. Those know not how to value God's acceptance, that know not how to despise the reproaches and contempts of men. (1.) He made a very long march by the way of them that dwelt in tents, ver. 11. Either because he hoped to find them kinder to him than the men of Succoth and Penuel, that dwelt in walled towns. (Sometimes there is more generosity and charity found in country-tents than in city-palaces. Or, because that was a road in which he would be least expected, and therefore that way it would be the greater surprize to them. It is evident, he spared no pains to complete his victory. Now he found it an advantage to have his three hundred men, such as could bear hunger, and thirst, and toil. It should seem he set upon them by night, as he had done before, for the host was secure. The security of sinners often proves their ruin, and dangers are most fatal when least feared. (2.) His success was very encouraging to resolution and industry in a good cause. He routed the army, ver. 11. and took the two kings prisoners, ver. 12. Note, The fear of the wicked it shall come upon him. They that think to run from the sword of the Lord and of Gideon, do but run upon it. If he flee from the iron weapon, yet the bow of steel shall strike him through; for evil pursueth sinners.

2. Here is Gideon, as a righteous judge, chastising the insolence of the disaffected Israelites, the men of Succoth, and the men of Penuel, both in the tribe of Gad, on the other side Jordan.

1. Their crime was great. Gideon, with a handful of feeble folk, was pursuing the common enemy, to complete the deliverance of Israel; his way leads him through the city of Succoth first; and afterwards of Penuel; he expects not that the magistrates should meet him in their formalities, congratulate his victory, present him with the keys of their city, give him a treat, much less that they should send forces in to his assistance, though he had reason to expect all this; but he only begs some necessary food for his soldiers, that were ready to faint for want, and he doth it very humbly and importunately, *Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me*, ver. 5. The request had been reasonable if they had been but poor travellers in distress, but considering that they were soldiers, called and chosen, and faithful, Rev. xvii. 4. men whom God had greatly honoured, and whom Israel was highly obliged to, that had done great service to their country, and were now doing more; that they were conquerors, and had power to put them under contribution; that they were fighting God's battles and Israel's; nothing could be more just than that they should furnish them with the best provisions their city afforded. But the princes of Succoth neither feared God, nor regarded man: For, 1. In contempt of God, they refused to answer the just demands of him whom God had raised up to save them, affronted him, bantered him, despised the success he had already been honoured with, despised of the success of his present undertaking; did what they could to discourage him in prosecuting of the war, and were very willing to believe that the remaining forces of Midian, which they

had now seen march through their country, will be too hard for him. *Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand?* No, nor never will be, so they conclude, judging by the disproportion of numbers. 2. The bowels of their compassion were shut up against their brethren, they were as destitute of love as they were of faith, would not give morsels of bread (so some read it) to them that were ready to perish. Were these princes? were these Israelites? unworthy either title, base and degenerate men. Surely they were worshippers of Baal, or in the interests of Midian. The men of Penuel gave the same answer to the same request, *delighting the sword of the Lord, and of Gideon*, ver. 8.

2. The warning he gave them of the punishment of their crime was very fair. (1.) He did not punish it immediately, because he would not lose so much time from the pursuit of the enemy that were flying from him, because he would not seem to do it in a heat of passion; and because he should do it more to their shame and confusion, when he had completed his undertaking, which they thought impracticable. But, (2.) He told them how he would punish it, ver. 7—9. To shew the confidence he had of success in the strength of God, and that if they had the least grain of grace and consideration left, they might upon second thoughts repent of their folly, humble themselves, and contrive how to atone for it, by sending after him succours and supplies, which if they had done, no doubt Gideon would have pardoned them. God gives notice of danger, and space to repent, that sinners may flee from the wrath to come.

3. The warning being slighted, the punishment, though very severe, was really very just. (1.) The princes of Succoth were first made examples, Gideon got intelligence of their number, seventy-seven men, their names and places of abode, which were described in writing to him, ver. 14. And to their great surprize, when they thought he had scarce overtaken the Midianites, he was returned a conqueror; his three hundred men were now the ministers of his justice, secured all these princes, brought them before Gideon, who shewed them his royal captives in chains, these are the men you thought me an unequal match for, and would give me no assistance in the pursuit of, ver. 15. And he punished them with thorns and briers, but it should seem, not unto death. With these, 1. He tormented their bodies, either by scourging, or rolling them in the thorns and briers; some way or other he tore their flesh, ver. 7. *Those shall have judgment without mercy*, that have shewed no mercy. Perhaps he observed them to be soft and delicate men, who despised him and his company for their roughness and hardness, and therefore Gideon thus mortified them for their effeminacy. 2. He instructed their minds, with these he taught the men of Succoth, ver. 16. The correction he gave them was intended not for destruction, but wholesome discipline, to make them wiser and better for the future. *He made them know*, to the word is, made them know themselves and their folly, God and their duty, made them know who Gideon was, since they would not know by the success wherewith God had crowned him. Note, Many are taught with the briers and thorns of affliction, that would not learn otherwise. God gives wisdom by the rod and reproof, chastens and teaches, and by correction opens the ear to discipline. Our blessed Saviour, though he were a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered, Heb. v. 1. Let every pricking brier, and grieving thorn, especially when it becomes a thorn in the flesh, be thus interpreted, thus improved, By this God designs to teach me, what good lesson shall I learn? (2.) Peniel's doom comes next, and it should seem he used them more severely than the other; for good reason, no doubt, ver. 17. (1.) He beat down their tower, of which they gloried, in which they trusted, and perhaps scornfully advised Gideon and his men rather to secure themselves in that, than to pursue the Midianites. What men make their pride, the ruin of it is justly made their shame. (2.) He slew the men of the city, not all, perhaps not the elders or princes, but those that had affronted him, and those only. He slew some of the men of the city that were most insolent and abusive, for terror to the rest, and so he taught the men of Penuel.

18. ¶ Then he said unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they, each one resembled the children of a king. 19. And he said, They were my brethren, even the sons of my mother: as the LORD liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you. 20. And he said unto Jether his first-born, Up, and slay them: but the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he was yet a youth. 21. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that were on their camels necks.

Judgment began at the house of God, in the just correction of the men of Succoth and Penuel, who were Israelites, but it did not end there. The kings of Midian, when they had served to demonstrate Gideon's victories, and to grace his triumphs, must now be reckoned with.

1. They are indicted for the murder of Gideon's brethren some time ago at mount Tabor. When the children of Israel, for fear of the Midianites, made them dens in the mountains, chap. vi. 2. those young men, it is likely, took shelter at the mountain, where they were found by these two kings, and most basely and barbarously slain in cold blood. When he asks them, *What manner of men they were?* ver. 18. it is not because he was uncertain of the thing, or wanted proof of it; he was not so little concerned for his brethren's blood, as not to enquire it out before now, nor were these proud tyrants solicitous to conceal it. But he puts that question to them, that by their acknowledgment of the more than ordinary comeliness of the persons they slew, their crime might appear the more heinous, and consequently their punishment the more righteous. They could not but own, that though they were found in a mean and abject condition, yet they had an unusual greatness and majesty in their countenances, not unlike Gideon himself at this time, they resembled the children of a king, born for something great.

2. Being found guilty of this murder by their own confession, Gideon, though he might have put them to death as Israel's judge, for the injuries done to that people in general, as Oreb and Zeeb, chap. vi. 25. yet he chooses rather to put on the character of an avenger of blood, as next of kin to the persons slain. *They were my brethren*, ver. 19. Their other crimes might have been forgiven, at least Gideon would not have slain them himself, let them have answered it to the people; but the voice of his brethren's blood cries, cries to him, now it is in the power of his hand to avenge it, and therefore there is no remedy, by him must their blood be shed, though they were kings. Little did they think to have heard of this so long after, but murder seldom goes unpunished in this life.

3. The execution is done by Gideon himself with his own hand, because

he was the *avenger of blood*; he bids his son slay them, for he was a near relation to the persons murdered, and fittest to be his father's substitute and representative, and he would thus train him up to the acts of justice and boldness, *ver. 20.* But, (1.) The young man himself desired to be executed, he feared, though they were bound and could make no resistance, *because he was yet a youth*, and not used to such work, courage doth not always run in a blood. (2.) The prisoners themselves desired that Gideon would excuse it, *ver. 21.* begged, if they must die, they might die by his own hand, which would be somewhat more honourable to them, and more easy, for by his great strength they would sooner be dispatched and rid out of their pain. *As is the man, so is his strength.* Either they mean it of themselves, they were men of such strength as called for a better hand than that young man's to overpower quickly; or of Gideon, thou art at thy full strength, he is not yet come to it, therefore be thou the executioner. From those that are grown up to maturity, it is expected, that what they do in any service, be done with so much the more strength. Gideon dispatched them presently, and seized the ornaments that were on their camels necks, ornaments like the moon, so it is in the margin, either badges of their royalty, or perhaps of their idolatry, for Ashteroth was represented by the moon, as Baal by the sun. With these he took all their other ornaments, as appears, *ver. 25.* where we find he did not put them to so good a use as one would have imagined. The destruction of these two kings, and that of the two princes, *chap. vii. 25.* is long after pleaded as a precedent in prayer for the ruin of other the Church's enemies, *Psal. lxxxiii. 11.* *Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, and all their princes as Zebah and Zalmunna, let them all be cut off in like manner.*

22. ¶ Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. 23. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule you. 24. And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that you would give me every man the ear-rings of his prey: (for they had golden ear-rings, because they were Ishmaelites.) 25. And they answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein, every man the ear-rings of his prey. 26. And the weight of the golden ear-rings that he requested, was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold, besides ornaments and collars, and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that were about their camels necks. 27. And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house. 28. ¶ Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more: and the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.

Here is, 1. Gideon's laudable modesty after his great victory, in refusing the government which the people offered him. (1.) It was honestly done of them to offer it, *ver. 22.* *Rule thou over us, for thou hast delivered us.* They thought it very reasonable, that he who had gone through the toils and perils of their deliverance, should enjoy the honour and power of commanding them ever after: and very desirable that he who in this great and critical juncture had had such manifest tokens of God's presence with him, should ever after preside in their affairs. Let us apply it to the Lord Jesus, he hath delivered us out of the hands of our enemies, our spiritual enemies, the worst and most dangerous, and therefore it is fit he should rule over us; for how can we be better ruled than by one that appears to have so great an interest in heaven, and so great kindness for this earth? We are delivered that we may serve him without fear, *Luke i. 74, 75.* (2.) It was honourably done of him to refuse it, *ver. 23.* *I will not rule over you.* What he did was with a design to serve them, not to rule them; to make them safe, easy, and happy, not to make himself great or honourable. And as he was not ambitious of grandeur himself, so he did not covet to entail it upon his family, *my son shall not rule over you*, either while I live, or when I am gone, *but the Lord shall still rule over you*, and constitute your judges by the special designation of his own Spirit, as he has done. This speaks, 1. His modesty, and the mean opinion he had of himself and his own merits. He thought the honour of doing good was recompence enough for all his services, which needed not be rewarded with the honour of bearing sway; *he that is greatest, let him be your minister.* 2. His piety and the great opinion he had of God's government. Perhaps he discerned in the people a dislike of the theocracy, or divine regimen, and a desire of a king like the nations, and thought his merits a colouring pretence to move for this change of government. But Gideon would by no means admit it. No good man can be pleased in any honour done to himself, which ought to be peculiar to God. *Were ye baptized in the name of Paul?* *1 Cor. i. 13.*

2. Gideon's irregular zeal to perpetuate the remembrance of this victory, by an ephod, made of the choicest of the spoils. 2. He asked the men of Israel to give him the ear-rings of their prey; for such ornaments they stripped the slain of in abundance. These he demanded, either because they were the finest gold, and therefore fittest for a religious use, or because they had had as ear-rings, some superstitious signification, which he thought too well of. Aaron called for the ear-rings to make the golden calf of, *Exod. xxxii. 2.* These Gideon begged, *ver. 24.* And he had reason enough to think that they who offered him a crown, when he declined it, would not deny him their ear-rings, when he begged them, nor did they, *ver. 25.* 2. He himself added the spoil he took from the kings of Midian, which it should seem had fallen to his share, *ver. 26.* The generals had that part of the prey which was most splendid, the prey of divers colours, *chap. v. 30.* 3. Of this he made an ephod, *ver. 27.* It was plausible enough, and might be well intended to preserve a memorial of so divine a victory in the judge's own city. But it was a very unadvised thing to make that memorial to be an ephod, a sacred garment. I would gladly put the best construction that can be upon the actions of good men, and such a one we are sure Gideon was. But we have reason to suspect that this ephod had, as usual, a teraphim annexed to it, *Hos. iii. 4.* And that he having an altar already built by divine appointment, *chap. vi. 26.* which he erroneously imagined he might still use for sacrifice, he intended this

for an oracle, to be consulted in doubtful cases. So the learned Dr. Spencer supposes. Each tribe having now very much of its government within itself, they were too apt to covet their religion among themselves. We read very little of Shiloh and the ark there, in all the story of the Judges. Sometimes by divine dispensation, and much oftener by the transgression of men, that law which obliged them to worship only at that one altar, seems not to have been so religiously observed as one would have expected, no more than afterwards, when in the reigns even of very good kings, the high places were not taken away; from which we may infer that that law had a further reach as a type of Christ, by whose mediation alone all our services are accepted. Gideon therefore, through ignorance or inconsideration, sinned in making this ephod, though he had a good intention in it. Shiloh, it is true, was not far off, but it was in Ephraim, and that tribe had lately disobliged him, *ver. 1.* which made him perhaps not care to go so often among them, as his occasions would lead him, to consult the oracle, and therefore he would have one nearer home. However this might be honestly intended, and at first did little hurt, yet in process of time, (1.) Israel went a whoring after it, that is, they deserted God's altar and priesthood, being fond of change, and prone to idolatry, and having some pretence to pay respect to this ephod, because so good a man as Gideon had set it up, and by degrees their respects to it grew more and more superstitious. Note, Many are led into false ways by one false step of a good man. The beginning of sin, particularly of idolatry and will-worship, is as the letting forth of water, so it has been found in the fatal corruptions of the church of Rome, therefore leave it off before it be maddled with. 2. It became a snare to Gideon himself, abating his zeal for the house of God in his old age, and much more to his house, who were drawn by it into sin, and it proved the ruin of the family.

3. Gideon's happy agency for the repose of Israel, *ver. 28.* The Midianites that had been vexations, gave them no more disturbance; Gideon, though he would not assume the honour and power of a king, governed as a judge, and did all the good offices he could for his people; so that the country was in quietness forty years. Hitherto the times of Israel had been reckoned by forties. Othniel judged forty years; Ehud eighty, just two forties; Barak forty, and now Gideon forty. Providence so ordering it to bring in mind the forty years of their wandering in the wilderness, forty years long was I grieved with this generation. And see *Ezek. iv. 6.* After these Eli ruled forty years, *1 Sam. iv. 18.* Samuel and Saul forty, *Acts xiii. 21.* David forty, and Solomon forty. Forty years is about an age.

29. ¶ And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house. 30. And Gideon had three-score and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives. 31. And his concubine that was in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech. 32. ¶ And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. 33. And it came to pass as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god. 34. And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hand of all their enemies on every side: 35. Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel.

We have here the conclusion of the story of Gideon.

1. He lived privately, *ver. 29.* he was not puffed up with his great honours, did not covet a palace or castle to dwell in, but retired to the house he had lived in before his elevation. Thus that brave Roman who was called from the plough upon a sudden occasion to command the army, when the action was over, returned to his plough again.

2. His family was multiplied. He had many wives, therein he transgressed the law, by them he had seventy sons, *ver. 30.* but one by a concubine, whom he named Abimelech, which signifies, my father a king; that proved the ruin of his family, *ver. 31.*

3. He died in honour, in a good old age, when he had lived as long as he was capable of serving God and his country, and who would desire to live any longer? And he was buried in the sepulchre of his fathers.

4. After his death the people corrupted themselves, and went all to naught. As soon as ever Gideon was dead, who had kept them close to the worship of the God of Israel, they found themselves under no restraint, and then they went a whoring after Baalim, *ver. 33.* They went a whoring first after another ephod, *ver. 27.* which Gideon had himself given them too much the occasion of, and now they went a whoring after another god. False worships made way for false denials. They now choose a new god, *chap. v. 8.* a god of a new name, Baal-berith; a goddess say some. Berith, some think, was Berytus, the place where the Phœnicians worshipped this idol. The Lord of a covenant, so it signifies, perhaps because his worshippers joined themselves by covenant to him, in imitation of Israel's covenanting with God, for the devil is God's ape. In this revolt of Israel to idolatry, they shewed, 1. Great ingratitude to God, *ver. 34.* They remembered not the Lord, not only who had delivered them into the hands of their enemies, to punish them for their idolatry, but who had also delivered them out of the hands of their enemies, to invite them back again to his service, both the judgments and the mercies were forgotten, and the impressions of them lost. 2. Great ingratitude to Gideon, *ver. 35.* A great deal of goodness he had shewed unto Israel, as a father to his country, for which they ought to have been kind to his family when he was gone, for that is one way by which we ought to shew ourselves grateful to our friends and benefactors, and may be returning their kindnesses when they are in their graves. But Israel shewed not this kindness to Gideon's family, as we shall find in the next chapter. Those who forget their God, no wonder if they forget their friends.

C H A P. IX.

The apostasy of Israel after the death of Gideon, is punished, not as the former apostacies, by a foreign invasion, or the oppressions of any neighbouring power, but by intestine broils among themselves, which in this chapter we have the story of, and it is hard to say, whether their sin, or their misery appears most in it. It is an account of the usurpation and tyranny of Abimelech, who was base son to Gideon;

so we must call him, and not more modestly, his natural son, he was so unlike him. We are here told, 1. How he thrust himself into the government at Shechem, his own city, by subtilty and cruelty, particularly by the murder of all his brethren, ver. 1—6. 2. How his doom was read in a parable by Jotham, Gideon's youngest son, ver. 7—21. 3. What strifes there were between Abimelech and his friends the Shechemites, ver. 22—41. 4. How this ended in the ruin of the Shechemites, ver. 42—49. And of Abimelech himself, ver. 50—57. Of this meteor, this ignis fatuus of a prince, that was not a protector, but plague to his country, we may say, as once was said of a great tyrant, that he came in like a fox, ruled like a lion, and died like a dog. For the transgression of a land, such are the princes thereof.

1. **AND** Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem, unto his mother's brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying. 2. Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether is better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal (*which are threescore and ten persons*) reign over you, or that one reign over you: remember also that I am your bone and your flesh. 3. And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech: for they said, He is our brother. 4. And they gave him threescore and ten *pieces* of silver, out of the house of Baal-berith: wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons which followed him. 5. And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, *being threescore and ten persons*, upon one stone: notwithstanding, yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left: for he hid himself. 6. And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem.

We are here told by what arts Abimelech got into the saddle, and made himself great. His mother perhaps had instilled into his mind some towering ambitious thoughts, and the name his father gave him carrying royalty in it, might help to blow up these sparks, and now he has buried his father, nothing will serve his proud spirit but he will succeed him in the government of Israel, directly contrary to his Father's will, for he had declared *no son of his should rule over them*. He had no call from God to this honour as his father had, nor was there any present occasion for a judge to deliver Israel, as there was when his father was advanced, but his own ambition must be gratified, and that is all he aims at. Now observe here,

1. How craftily he got his mother's relations into his interests. Shechem was a city in the tribe of Ephraim of great note. Joshua had held his last parliament there; if that city would but appear for him, and set him up, he thought it would go far in his favour. There he had an interest in the family of which his mother was, and by them he made an interest in the leading men of the city. It doth not appear that any of them had an eye to him as a man of merit, that had any thing to recommend him to such a choice, but the motion came first from himself. None would have dreamed of making such a fellow as he king, if he had not dreamed of it himself. And see here, (1.) How he wheedled them into the choice, ver. 2, 3. He barely suggested that Gideon having left seventy sons that made a good figure, and had a good interest, they were designing to keep the power which the father had in their hands, and by a joint influence to reign over Israel; now, saith he, you had better have one king, than more, than many, than so many: Affairs of state are best managed by a single person, ver. 2. We have no reason to think that any or all of Gideon's sons had the least intention to reign over Israel, they were of their father's mind, that *the Lord should reign over them*, and they were not called of him; yet this he insinuates to pave the way to his own pretensions. Note, Those who design ill themselves, are commonly most apt to suspect that others design ill. As for himself, he only puts them in mind of his relation to them, *verbum sapienti, remember that I am your bone and your flesh*. The plot took wonderfully: The magistrates of Shechem were pleased to think of their city being a royal city, and the metropolis of Israel, and therefore they *inclined to follow him, for they said, he is our brother*, and his advancement will be our advantage. (2.) How he got money from them to bear the charges of his pretensions, ver. 4. They gave him *seventy pieces of silver*, it is not said what the value of these pieces was; so many shekels was less, and so many talents more than we can well imagine, therefore it is supposed they were each a pound weight: but they gave it out of the house of Baal-berith, that is, out of the public treasury, which, out of respect to their idol, they deposited in his temple to be protected by him; or out of the offerings that had been made to that idol, which they hoped would prosper the better in his hands for its having been consecrated to their god. How unfit was he to reign over Israel, because unlikely to defend them, who instead of restraining and punishing idolatry, thus early made himself a pensioner to an idol? (3.) What soldiers he lifted; he hired into his service vain and light persons, the scum and scoundrels of the country, men of broken fortunes, giddy heads, and profligate lives; none but such would own him, and they were fittest to serve his purpose. Like leader, like followers.

2. How cruelly he got his father's sons out of the way. The first thing he did with the rabble he headed, was to kill all his brethren at once, publicly, and in cold blood, threescore and ten men, one only escaping, all slain upon one stone. See in this bloody tragedy, (1.) The power of ambition, what beasts it will turn men into, how it will break through all the ties of natural affection and natural conscience, and sacrificing that which is most sacred, dear and valuable to its designs. Strange that ever it should enter into the heart of a man to be so very barbarous! (2.) The peril of honour and high birth. Their being the sons of so great a man as Gideon, exposed them thus, and made Abimelech jealous of them. We find just the same number of Ahab's sons slain together at Samaria, 2 Kings x. 1. The Grand Seigniors have seldom thought themselves safe while any of their brethren have been unstrangled. Let none then envy those of high extraction, or complain of their own meanness and obscurity, the lower the safer.

Way being thus made for Abimelech's election, the men of Shechem proceeded to choose him king, ver. 6. God was not consulted whether they should have any king at all, much less who it should be; here is no advising with the priest, or with their brethren of any other city or tribe, though it was designed he should reign over Israel, ver. 22. But, 1. The Shechemites, as if they were the people, and wisdom must die with them, do all, they aided and abetted him in the murder of his brethren, ver. 24. and then they *made him king*. The men of Shechem, that is the great men, the chief magistrates of the city, and the house of Millo, that is, the common-council, the *full house, house of judges*, as the word signifies, those that met in their Guildhall (We read often of the house of Millo, or state-house in Jerusalem, or the city of David, 2 Sam. v. 9. 2 Kings xii. 20.) These gathered together, not to prosecute and punish Abimelech for this barbarous murder, as they ought to have done; he being one of their citizens, but to *make him king*. *Pretium sceleris tulit hic diadema*. What could they promise themselves from a king that laid a foundation of his kingdom in blood? 2. The rest of the Israelites were so very sottish as to be unconcerned; they took no care to give check to this usurpation, to protect the sons of Gideon, or to avenge their death, but tamely submitted to the bloody tyrant, as men that with their religion had lost their reason and all sense of honour and liberty, justice and gratitude. How vigorously had their fathers appeared to avenge the death of the Levite's concubine, and yet so wretchedly degenerate are they now, as not to attempt the revenging of the death of Gideon's sons, it is for this that they are charged with ingratitude, chap. viii. 35. *Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal*.

7. ¶ And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizzim, and lift up his voice and cried, and said unto them, Harken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. 8. The trees went forth *on a time* to anoint a king over them, and they said unto the olive-tree, Reign thou over us. 9. But the olive-tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? 10. And the trees said to the fig-tree, Come thou, *and* reign over us. 11. But the fig-tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? 12. Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, *and* reign over us. 13. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheareth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? 14. Then said, all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, *and* reign over us. 15. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, *then come and* put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon. 16. Now therefore, if ye have done truly and sincerely, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his lands; 17. (For my father fought for you, and adventured his life for you, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian: 18. And ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maid-servant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother.) 19. If ye then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal, and with his house this day, *then rejoice ye in Abimelech*, and let him also rejoice in you: 20. But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo: and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech. 21. And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.

We have here the only testimony that appears to have been borne against the wicked confederacy of Abimelech, and the men of Shechem. It was a sign they had provoked God to depart from them, that neither any prophet was sent, nor any remarkable judgment to awaken this stupid people, and to stop the progress of this threatening mischief. Only Jotham, the youngest son of Gideon, who by a special providence escaped the common ruin of his family, ver. 5. dealt plainly with the Shechemites, and his speech, which is here recorded, shews him to be a man of such great ingenuity and wisdom, and really such an accomplished gentleman, that we cannot but the more lament the fall of Gideon's sons. Jotham did not go about to raise an army out of the other cities of Israel, in which, one would think, he might have made a good interest for his father's sake, to avenge his brethren's death, much less to set up himself in competition with Abimelech, so groundless was the usurper's suggestion, that the sons of Gideon aimed at dominion, ver. 2. but he contents himself with giving a faithful reproof to the Shechemites, and fair warning of the fatal consequences. He got an opportunity of speaking to them from the top of mount Gerizzim, the mount of blessings, at the foot of which, probably the Shechemites were upon some occasion or other gathered together, Josephus saith, solemnizing a festival, and it seems they were willing to hear what he had to say.

1. His preface is very serious, ver. 7. *Harken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you*. As ever you hope to obtain God's favour, and to be accepted of him, give me a patient and impartial hearing. Note, Those that expect to have God hear their prayers, must be willing to hear reason, to hear a faithful reproof, but to hear the complaints and appeals of wronged innocency. If we turn away our ear from hearing the law, our prayer will be an abomination, Prov. xxviii. 9.

2. His parable is very ingenious, that when the trees were disposed to choose a king, the government was offered to those valuable noble trees, the olive, the fig-tree, and the vine, but they refused it, choosing rather to serve

serve than rule, to do good than to bear sway. But the same tender being made to the bramble, he accepted it, and talked big upon it. It was an ancient way of instruction this by parables, and very useful, especially to give reproofs by.

(1.) He hereby applauds the generous modesty of Gideon and the other judges who were before him, and perhaps of the sons of Gideon, who had declined accepting the state and power of kings when they might have had it. And likewise shews, that it is in general the temper of all wise and good men to decline preferment, and to choose rather to be useful than to be great.

1. There was no occasion at all for the trees to choose a king, they are all the *trees of the Lord which he has planted*, Psal. civ. 16. and which therefore he will protect: Nor was there any occasion for Israel to talk of setting a king over them, for the *Lord was their king*.

2. When they had in their thoughts to choose a king, they did not offer the government to the stately cedar, or the lofty pine, which are only for show and shade, and not otherwise useful till they are cut down, but to the fruit-trees, the vine and the olive. Those that bear fruit for the public good, are justly respected and honoured by all that are wise, more than they that affect to make a figure. For a good useful man some would even *dare to die*.

3. The reason which all these fruit-trees gave for their refusal was much the same. The olive pleads, *ver. 9. Should I leave my fatness*; and the vine, *ver. 13. Should I leave my wine*, wherewith both God and man are served and honoured, for oil and wine were both used at God's altars, and at men's tables; and, *Should I leave my sweetness, saith the fig-tree, and my good fruit*, *ver. 11. and go to be promoted over the trees*, or, as the margin reads it, *go up and down for the trees*. It is intimated, 1. That government involves a man in a great deal of toil and care; he that is promoted over the trees must go up and down for them, and make himself a perfect drudge to business. 2. That those who are preferred to places of public trust and power, must resolve to forego all their private interest and advantages, and sacrifice them to the good of the community. The fig-tree must lose its sweetness, its sweet retirement, sweet repose, and sweet conversation and contemplation, if it go to be promoted over the trees, and must undergo a constant fatigue. 3. That those who are advanced to honour and dignity, are in great danger of losing their fatness and fruitfulness. Preferment is apt to make men proud and slothful, and that spoils their usefulness, wherewith in a lower sphere they honoured God and man. For which reason, they that desire to do good, are afraid of being too great.

(2.) He hereby exposes the ridiculous ambition of Abimelech, whom he compares to the bramble or thistle, *ver. 14. He supposes the trees to make their court to him, Come thou and reign over us*, perhaps, because he knew not that the first motion of Abimelech's preferment came from himself, as we found, *ver. 2. but thought the Shechemites had proposed it to him*; however, supposing it so, his folly in accepting it deserved to be chastized. The bramble, a worthless plant, not to be numbered among the trees, useless and fruitless, nay, hurtful and vexatious, scratching and tearing, and doing mischief, it began with a curse, and its end is to be burned: Such an one was Abimelech, and yet chosen to the government *by the trees, by all the trees*; his election seems to have been more unanimous than any of the other. Let us not think it strange, if we see *folly set in great dignity*, Eccl. x. 6. and the *vilest men exalted*, Psal. xii. 8. and men blind to their own interest in the choice of their guides. The bramble being chosen to the government, he takes no time to consider whether he should accept it or no, but presently, as if he had been born and bred to dominion, hectors and assures them they should find him as he found them. See what *great swelling words of vanity* he speaks, *ver. 15. what promises* he makes to his faithful subjects, *let them come and trust in his shadow*: A goodly shadow to trust in; how unlike to the *shadow of a great rock in a weary land*, which a good magistrate is compared to, *Iju. xxii. 2. Come, trust in this shadow*! more likely to be scratched if they came near him. Thus men *boast of a false gift*. Yet he threatens with as much confidence as he promiseth if ye be not faithful, *let fire come out of the bramble*, a very unlikely thing to spit fire, and devour the cedars of Lebanon, more likely to catch fire, and be itself devoured.

3. His application is very close and plain. In it, (1.) He minds them of the many good services his father had done for them, *ver. 17. He fought their battles in peril of his own life, and to their unspeakable advantage*. It was a shame they needed to be put in mind of this. (2.) He aggravates their unkindness to his father's family, they had not *done to him according to the deserting of his hands*, *ver. 16. Great merits often meet with very ill returns, especially to posterity, when the benefactor is forgotten, as Joseph was among the Egyptians. Gideon had left many sons that were an honour to his name and family, and those they had barbarously murdered; one son he had left that was the blemish of his name and family, for he was the son of his maid-servant, whom all that had any respect to Gideon's honour, would endeavour to conceal, yet him they made their king. In both they put the utmost contempt imaginable upon Gideon.* (3.) He leaves it to the event to determine whether they had done well, whereby he lodges the appeal with the divine providence. (1.) If they prospered long in this villainy, he would give them leave to say they had well done, *ver. 19. If your carriage towards the house of Gideon be such as can be justified at any bar of justice, honour, or conscience, much good may it do you with your new king*. But, (2.) If they had, as he was sure they had, dealt basely and wickedly in this matter, let them never expect to prosper, *ver. 20. Abimelech and the Shechemites that had strengthened one another's hands in this villainy, would certainly be a plague and ruin to one another. Let none expect to do ill and fare well*.

Jotham having given them this admonition, made a shift to escape with his life, *ver. 21. either they could not reach him, or they were so far convinced, that they would not add the guilt of his blood to all the rest: but for fear of Abimelech he lived in exile, in some remote obscure place. Those whose extraction and education is never so high, know not to what difficulties and straits they may be reduced*.

22. ¶ When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel, 23. Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem: and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech: 24. That the cruelty done to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which slew them; and upon the men of Shechem, which aided him in the killing of his brethren. 25. And the men of Shechem set liers in wait for him in the top of the mountains, and they robbed all that came along that way by them: and it was told Abimelech. 26. And Gaal the son of

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Ebed came with his brethren, and went over to Shechem: and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him. 27. And they went out into the fields, and gathered their vineyards, and trode the grapes, and made merry, and went into the house of their God, and did eat and drink, and cursed Abimelech. 28. And Gaal the son of Ebed said, Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him: is not he the son of Jerubbaal, and Zebul his officer? serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem: for why should we serve him: 29. And would to God this people were under my hand: then would I remove Abimelech. And he said to Abimelech, Increase thine army, and come out. 30. ¶ And when Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled. 31. And he sent messengers unto Abimelech privily, saying, Behold, Gaal the son of Ebed, and his brethren be come to Shechem: and behold they fortify the city against thee. 32. Now therefore up by night, thou and the people that is with thee, and lie in wait in the field. 33. And it shall be, that in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, thou shalt rise early, and set upon the city: and, behold, when he and the people that is with him come out against thee, then mayest thou do to them as thou shalt find occasion. 34. ¶ And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that were with him, by night, and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies. 35. And Gaal the son of Ebed went out, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and Abimelech rose up, and the people that were with him from lying in wait. 36. And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, Behold, there come people down from the top of the mountains. And Zebul said unto him, Thou seest the shadow of the mountains, as if they were men. 37. And Gaal spake again, and said, See, there come people down by the middle of the land, and another company come along by the plain of Meonenim. 38. Then said Zebul unto him, Where is now thy mouth, wherewith thou saidst, Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him? is not this the people that thou hast despised? go out, I pray now, and fight with them. 39. And Gaal went out before the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech. 40. And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and many were overthrown, and wounded even unto the entering of the gate. 41. And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah; and Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren that they should not dwell in Shechem. 42. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people went out into the field, and they told Abimelech. 43. And he took the people, and divided them into three companies, and laid wait in the field, and looked, and behold, the people were come forth out of the city, and he rose up against them and smote them. 44. And Abimelech, and the company that was with him rushed forward, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and the two other companies ran upon all the people that were in the fields, and slew them. 45. And Abimelech fought against the city all that day, and he took the city, and slew the people that was therein, and beat down the city, and sowed it with salt. 46. ¶ And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard that, they entered into an hold of the house of the god Berith. 47. And it was told Abimelech that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together. 48. And Abimelech gat him up to mount Zalmon, he and all the people that were with him: and Abimelech took an ax in his hand, and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it, and laid it on his shoulder, and said unto the people that were with him, What ye have seen me do, make haste and do as I have done. 49. And all the people likewise cut down every man his bough, and followed Abimelech, and put them to the hold, and set the hold on fire upon them: so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died also, about a thousand men and women.

Three years Abimelech reigned after a sort, without any disturbance; it is not said he judged Israel, or did any service at all to his country, but so long he enjoyed the title and dignity of a king, and not only the Shechemites, but many other places paid him respect. They were fond of a king that could please themselves with such a one as this.

But the triumphing of the wicked is short. Within three years, as the year of a hireling, all this glory shall be condemned, and laid in the dust, *Iju. xvi. 14. The ruin of these confederates in wickedness was from the righteous hand of God to whom vengeance belongs. He sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the Shechemites, ver. 22. that is, they grew jealous one of another, and ill-affected one to another. He slighted them that set him up, and countenanced other cities perhaps more than theirs, which now began to come into his interest; and then they grew uneasy at his government, blamed*

his conduct, and quarrelled at his impositions. This was from God. He permitted the devil, that great mischief-maker, to sow discord between them, and he is an evil spirit, whom God not only keeps under his check, but sometimes serves his own purposes by. Their own lusts were evil spirits, they are devils in men's own hearts, from them come wars and fightings. These God gave them up to, and so might he said to send the evil spirits between them. When men's sin is made their punishment, though God is not the author of the sin, yet the punishment is from him. The quarrel God had with Abimelech, and the Shechemites, was for the murder of the sons of Gideon, *ver. 24. That the cruelty done to them might come, and their blood be laid as a burden upon Abimelech that slew them, and the men of Shechem that helped him.* Note, 1. Sooner or later God will make inquisition for blood, innocent blood, and will return it on the heads of those that shed it, who shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy. 2. Accessories shall be reckoned with as well as principals in that and other sins. The Shechemites that countenanced Abimelech's pretensions, aided and abetted him in his bloody projects, and avowed the fact by making him king after he had done it, must fall with him, fall by him, and fall first. 3. Those that combine together to do wickedly, are justly dashed in pieces one against another. Blood cannot be a lasting cement to any interest.

1. The Shechemites began to affront Abimelech, perhaps they scarce knew why, or wherefore, but they were to change. (1.) They dealt treacherously with him, *ver. 23.* It is not said, they repented of their sin in owning him, had they done so, it had been laudable to disown him, but they did it only upon some particular pique, conceived against him by their pride or envy. They that let him up were the first that deserted him, and endeavoured to kick him off. It is not strange that those who were ungrateful to Gideon were unfaithful to Abimelech, for what will hold those that will not be held by the obligation of such merits as Gideon's were? Note, It is just with God, that those who tempt others to be once perfidious, should afterwards be themselves betrayed by those whom they have taught to be perfidious. (2.) They aimed to seize him when he was at Arumah, *ver. 41.* his country seat, expecting him to come to town, they set liers to wait for him, *ver. 25.* who would make him their prisoner, whom they had lately made their prince. Those who were thus posted, he not coming, took the opportunity of robbing travellers, which would help to make the people more and more uneasy under Abimelech, when they saw he could not, or would not, protect them from highwaymen. (3.) They entertained one Gaal, and set him up as their head in opposition to Abimelech, *ver. 26.* This Gaal is said to be the son of Bed, which signifies a servant, perhaps speaking the meanness of his extraction, as Abimelech was by the mother's side, so he, by the father's, the son of a servant; here was one bramble contending with another. We have reason to suspect that this Gaal was a native Canaanite, because he courts the Shechemites into subjection to the men of Hamor, who was the ancient Lord of this city in Jacob's time. He was a bold ambitious man, served their purpose admirably well, when they were disposed to quarrel with Abimelech, and they also served his purpose, so he went over to them to blow the coals, and they put their confidence in him. (4.) They did all the despite they could to Abimelech's name, *ver. 27.* They made themselves very merry in his absence, as those that were glad he was out of the way, and that now they had another to head them, were in hopes to get clear of him: nay, they went into the house of their god, to solemnize their feast of in-gathering, and there they did eat, and drink, and cursed Abimelech, not only said all the ill they could of him in their table-talk, and the songs of their drunkards, but wished all the ill they could to him over their sacrifices, praying to their idol to destroy him. They drank healths to his confusion, and with as loud huzzas as ever they had drank them to his prosperity. The very temple, whence they had fetched money to set him up with, did they now meet in to curse him, and contrive his ruin? Had they deserted their idol-god with their image-king, they might have hoped to prosper; but while they still cleave to the former, the latter shall cleave to them to their ruin? How should Satan cast out Satan? (5.) They pleased themselves with Gaal's defying of Abimelech, *ver. 28, 29.* They loved to hear that impudent upstart speak scornfully, (1.) Of Abimelech, though calling him in disdain Shechem, or a Shechemite, he reflected upon their own city. (2.) Of his good father, likewise, Gideon, is not he the son of Jerubbaal? So he called him, perhaps in an impious indignation at his name and memory, for throwing down the altar of Baal, turning that to his reproach which was his praise. (3.) Of his prime minister of state, Zebul his officer, the ruler of his city. We may well be ashamed to serve them, and need not be afraid to oppose them. Men of turbulent ambitious spirits, thus despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Gaal aimed not to recover Shechem's liberty, only to change their tyrant, O that this people were under my hand, what I would do! I would challenge Abimelech to try titles for the crown; and it should seem he desired his friends to send him word that he was ready to dispute it with him, whenever he pleased, *increase thine army, and come out.* Do thy worst, let the point be determined by the sword. This pleased the Shechemites, who were now as sick of Abimelech as ever they had been fond of him. Men of no conscience will be men of no constancy.

2. Abimelech turned all his force upon them, and in a little time quite ruined them. Observe the steps of it.

1. The Shechemites counsels were betrayed to Abimelech by Zebul his confidant, the ruler of the city, who continued hearty for him. His anger was kindled, *ver. 30.* and the more because Gaal had spoken slightly of him *ver. 28.* for perhaps if he had complimented and caressed him now things were in this temper, he might have gained him to his interest: but he being disobliterated, sends notice to Abimelech of all that was said and done in Shechem against him, *ver. 32.* Betrayers are often betrayed by some among themselves, and the curling of the king is sometimes strangely carried by a bird of the air. He prudently advises him to come against the city immediately, and lose no time, *ver. 32, 33.* He thinks it best that he should march his forces by night into the neighbourhood, surprise the city in the morning, and then make the best of his advantages. How could the Shechemites hope to speed in their attempt, when the ruler of their city was in the interest of their enemy? They knew it, and yet took no care to secure him.

2. Gaal, that headed their faction, having been betrayed by Zebul, Abimelech's confidant, was most wretchedly bantered by him; Abimelech, according to Zebul's advice, drew all his forces down upon Shechem by night, *ver. 34.* Gaal in the morning went out to the gate, *ver. 35.* to see what posture things were in, and to enquire what news; Zebul, as a ruler of the city, met him there as a friend. Abimelech and his forces beginning to move towards the city. Gaal discovers them, *ver. 36.* takes notice of their approach to Zebul that was standing with him, little thinking that he had sent for them, and was now expecting them. Look you saith he, do not let me see a body of men coming down from the mountain towards us, yonder they are, pointing to the place: no, no, saith Zebul, the eye-sight deceives thee, it is but the shadow of the mountain which thou takest to be an army. By this he intended, (1.) To ridicule him, as a man of no sense nor spirit, and therefore very unfit for what he pretended to; as

a man that might easily be imposed upon, and made to believe any thing, and that was so silly and so cowardly, that he apprehended danger where there was none, and was ready to fight with a shadow. (2.) To detain him and hold him in talk, while the forces of Abimelech were coming up, that thereby they might gain advantage. But when Gaal being content to believe those he now saw to be but the shadow of the mountains (perhaps the mountains of Ebal and Gerizzem, which lay close by the city) was deceived by the discovery of two other companies that marched apace towards the city, then Zebul took another way to banter him, upbraiding him with what he had said but a day or two before, in contempt of Abimelech, *ver. 38. Where is now thy mouth,* that foul mouth of thine, *wherewith thou saidst, Who is Abimelech?* Note, Proud and haughty people are often made in a little time to change their note, and to dread those whom they had most despised. Gaal had in a bravado challenged Abimelech to *increase his army and come out;* but now Zebul in Abimelech's name challenges him. *Go out and fight with them, if thou darest.* Justly are the insolent thus insulted over.

3. Abimelech routed Gaal's forces that sallied out of the town, *ver. 39, 40.* Gaal disheartened, no doubt by Zebul's hectoring him, and perceiving his interest weaker than he thought it was, though he marched out against Abimelech with what little force he had, was soon put to the worst, and obliged to retire into the city with great precipitation. In this action the Shechemites loss was considerable, *many were overthrown and wounded;* the common effect of popular tumults, in which the inconsiderate multitude are often drawn into fatal snares by those that promise them mighty success.

4. Zebul that night expelled Gaal, and the party he had brought with him into Shechem, out of the city, *ver. 41.* sending him to the place from whence he came. For though the generality of the city continued still averse to Abimelech, as appears by the sequel of the story, yet they were willing to part with Gaal, and did not oppose his expulsion, because though he had talked big, both his conduct and courage had failed him when there was occasion for them. Most people judge of men's fitness for business by their success, and that he doth not speed well, is concluded not to do well. Well, Gaal's interest in Shechem is soon at an end, and he that had talked of removing Abimelech, is himself removed, nor do we ever hear of him any more. *Exit Gaal.*

5. Abimelech the next day set upon the city, and quite destroyed it for their treacherous dealings with him. Perhaps Abimelech had notice of their expelling Gaal, who had headed the faction, with which they thought he would have been satisfied, but the crime was too deep to be thus atoned for, and his resentments too keen to be pacified by so small an instance of submission, besides that it was more Zebul's act than theirs; by it their hands were weakened, and therefore he resolved to follow his blow, and effectually to chastise their treachery. 1. He had intelligence brought him that the people of Shechem were come out into the field, *ver. 42.* Some think into the field of business to plough and sow, having lately gathered in their harvest, or to perfect their harvest, for it was only their vintage that they had made an end of, *ver. 27.* And then it intimates that they were secure, and because Abimelech was retired, *ver. 41.* they thought themselves in no danger from him, and then the issue of it is an instance of sudden destruction coming upon those that cry peace and safety. Others think they went out into the field of battle; though Gaal was driven out they would not lay down their arms, but put themselves in a posture for another engagement with Abimelech, in which they hoped to retrieve what they had lost the day before. 2. He himself with a strong detachment cut off the communication between them and the city, *flood in the entering of the gate,* *ver. 44.* that they might neither make their retreat into the city, nor receive any succours from the city, and then sent two companies of his men, who were quite too strong for them, and they put them all to the sword *ran upon them that were in the field and slew them.* When we go about our business, we are not sure we shall come home again; there are deaths both in the city and in the field. 3. He then fell upon the city itself, and with a rage, reaching up to heaven, though it was the place of his nativity laid it in ruins, slew all the people, beat down all the buildings, and in token of his desire that it might be a perpetual desolation, sowed it with salt, that it might remain a lasting monument of the punishment of perfidiousness. Yet Abimelech prevailed not to make its desolations perpetual, for it was afterwards rebuilt, and became so considerable a place, that all Israel came thither to make Rehoboam king, 1 Kings xii. 1. And the place proved an ill omen. Abimelech intended hereby to punish the Shechemites for their slighting him now, but God intended to punish them for their serving him formerly in the murder of Gideon's sons. Thus when God makes use of men as instruments in his hand to do his work, he means one thing, and they another, *Ihu. 6, 7.* They design to maintain their honour, but God his.

6. Those that retire into a strong hold of their idol temple were all destroyed there. These are called the men of the tower of Shechem, *ver. 46, 47.* Some castle that belonged to the city but lay at some distance from it; they hearing of the destruction of the city, withdrew into a hold of the temple, trusting, it is likely, not so much to its strength as to its sanctity; they put themselves under the protection of their idol, for thus *all people will walk in the name of their god,* and shall not we then choose to dwell in the house of the Lord all the day of our life, for in the time of trouble he shall hide us in his pavilion? *Psal. xxvii. 5.* The name of the Lord is a strong tower, *Prov. xviii. 10.* But that which they hoped would have been for their welfare, proved to them a snare and a trap, as those will certainly find that run to idols for shelter, it will prove a refuge of lies. When Abimelech had them all together penned up in that hold, he desired no more. That barbarous project presently came into his head, of setting fire to the strong-hold, and burning all the birds together in the nest. He kept the design to himself, but sets all his men on work to expedite the execution of it, *ver. 48, 49.* He ordered them all to follow him, and do as he did; as his father had said to his men, *chap. vii. 17. look on me and do likewise;* so saith he to his, as becomes a general that will not be wanting to give both the plainest direction, and the highest encouragement that can be to his soldiers, *what ye have seen me do, make haste to do as I have done.* Not *ite illuc,* but *venite huc.* The officers in Christ's army should thus teach by their example, *Phil. iv. 9.* He and they fetched each of them a bough from a wood not far off, laid all their boughs together under the wall of this tower, which it is likely was of wood, set fire to their boughs, and so burnt down their hold, and all that were in it, who were either burnt or stifled with the smoke. What inventions men have to destroy one another? whence come these cruel wars and fightings but from their lusts? Some think the men of the tower of Shechem were the same with the house of Millo, and then Jotham's just imprecation was answered in the letter, *let fire come out from Abimelech,* and devour not only in general the men of Shechem, but in particular the house of Millo, *ver. 20.* About one thousand men and women perished in these flames, many of whom, it is probable, were no way concerned in the quarrel between Abimelech and the Shechemites, nor meddled with either side, yet in this civil war came to this miserable end; for men of factious turbulent spirits, *perish not only in their iniquity,* but involve many more that follow in their simplicity, in the same calamity with them.

50. ¶ Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it. 51. But there was a strong tower within the city, and thither fled all the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut it to them, and gat them up to the top of the tower. 52. And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower, to burn it with fire. 53. And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to brake his skull. 54. Then he called hastily unto the young man his armour-bearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died. 55. And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place. 56. ¶ Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren. 57. And all the evil of the men of Shechem, did God render upon their heads: and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

We have seen the ruin of the Shechemites completed by the hand of Abimelech, and now it comes to his turn to be reckoned with, who was their leader in villainy. Thebez was a small city, it is likely not far from Shechem, dependent upon it, and in confederacy with it. Now,

1. Abimelech attempted the destruction of this city, *ver. 50.* drove all the inhabitants of the town into the castle, or citadel, *ver. 51.* When he had them there, he did not doubt but to do the same execution here that he had lately done at the strong-hold of the temple of Baal-berith, not considering that the tower of an idol-temple lay more exposed to divine vengeance than any other tower. He attempted to set fire to this tower, at least to burn down the door, and to force an entrance, *ver. 52.* Those who have escaped and succeeded well in one desperate attempt, are apt to think the like attempt another time not desperate. This instance was long after quoted, to shew how dangerous it is to come near the wall of a besieged city, *2 Sam. xi. 20—22.* But God intimates those whom he will ruin.

2. In the attempt he was himself destroyed, having his brains knocked out with a piece of a millstone, *ver. 53.* No doubt this man was a murderer, whom though he had escaped the dangers of the war with Shechem, yet vengeance suffered not to live, *Acts xxviii. 1.* Evil pursues sinners, and sometimes overtakes them when they are not only secure but triumphant. Thebez, we may suppose, was a weak inconsiderable place, conquered with Shechem, Abimelech, having conquered the greater, makes no doubt of being master of the less without any difficulty, especially when he had taken the city, and had only the tower to deal with, yet he lays his bones with that, and there is all his honour buried. Thus are the mighty things of the world often confounded by the weakest, and those things that are most made light of. See here what rebukes those are justly put under many times by the divine providence, that are unreasonable in their demands of satisfaction for injuries received: Abimelech had some reason to chafe the Shechemites, and he had done it with a witness; but when he will carry his revenges farther; and nothing will serve but that Thebez also must be sacrificed to his rage, he is not only disappointed there but destroyed, for verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.

Three circumstances are observable in the death of Abimelech. (1.) That he was slain with a stone, as he had slain his brethren all upon one stone. (2.) That he had his skull broke, vengeance aimed at that guilty head which had worn the usurped crown. (3.) That the stone was cast upon him by a woman, *ver. 53.* He saw the stone come, it was therefore strange he did not avoid it, but no doubt it made it so much the greater mortification to him, to see from what hand it came. Sisera died by a woman's hand, and knew it not, but Abimelech knew it; and when he found himself ready to breathe his last, nothing troubled him so much as this, that it should be said a woman slew him. See, (1.) His foolish pride, in laying so much to heart this little circumstance of his disgrace. Here was no care taken about his precious soul, no concerns what would become of that, no prayer to God for his mercy, but very solicitous he is to patch up his shattered credit, when there is no patching his shattered skull. O let it never be said that such a mighty man as Abimelech was killed by a woman! The man was dying, but his pride was alive and strong, and the same vain-glorious humour that had governed him all along, appears now at last. *Qualis vita, finis ita.* As God punished his cruelty by the manner of his death, so he punished his pride by the instrument of it. (2.) His foolish project to avoid this disgrace, nothing could be more ridiculous: his own servant must run him through, not to rid him the sooner out of his pain, but that men say not, a woman slew him. Could he think that this would conceal what the woman had done, and not rather proclaim it the more? Nay, it added to the infamy of his death, for hereby he becomes a self-murderer. Better have it said, a woman slew him, than that it should be said, his servant slew him by his own order; yet now both will be said of him to his everlasting reproach. And it is observable, that this very thing which Abimelech was in such care to conceal, appears to have been more particularly remembered by posterity, than most passages of his history; for Joab speaks of it, as that which he expected David would reproach him with, for coming so nigh the wall, *2 Sam. xi. 21.* The ignominy we seek to avoid by sin, we do but perpetuate the remembrance of.

Now the issue of all is, that Abimelech being slain, (1.) Israel's peace was restored, an end put to this civil war, for they that followed him, departed every man unto his place, *ver. 55.* (2.) God's justice was glorified, *ver. 56, 57.* Thus God punished the wickedness of Abimelech, and of the men of Shechem, and performed Jotham's curse, for it was not a curse causeless. Thus he preserved the honour of his government, and gave warning to all ages to expect blood for blood. The Lord is known by these judgments which he executed, when the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Though wickedness may prosper a while, it will not prosper always.

C H A P. X.

In this chapter we have, 1. The peaceable times Israel enjoyed under the government of two judges, Tola and Jair; *ver. 1—5.* 2. The troublesome times that ensued. 4. Israel's sin that brought them into trouble, *ver. 6.* 2. The trouble itself they were in, *ver. 7, 8, 9.* 3. Their repentance and humiliation for sin, their prayers and re-

formation, and the mercy they found with God thereupon, *ver. 10—16.* 4. Preparation made for their deliverance out of the hand of their oppressors, *ver. 17—28.*

1. AND after Abimelech, there arose to defend Israel, Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim. 2. And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir. 3. ¶ And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years. 4. And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havoth-jair unto this day, which are in the land of Gilead. 5. And Jair died, and was buried in Camon.

Quiet and peaceable reigns, though the best to live in, are the worst to write of, as yielding least variety of matter for the historian to entertain his reader with; such were the reigns of these two judges. Tola and Jair, who make but a small figure, and take up but a very little room in this history. But, no doubt, they were both raised up of God to serve their country in the quality of judges, nor pretending as Abimelech had done to the grandeur of kings, nor like him taking the honour they had to themselves, but were called of God to it.

1. Concerning Tola, it is said, that he arose after Abimelech to defend Israel, *ver. 1.* After Abimelech had debauched Israel by his wickedness, disquieted and disturbed them by his restless ambition, and by the mischiefs he brought on them, exposing them to enemies from abroad, God spirited this good man to appear for the reforming of abuses, the putting down of idolatry, the appeasing of tumults, and the healing of the wounds given to the state by Abimelech's usurpation. Thus he saved them from themselves, and guarded them against their enemies. He was of the tribe of Issachar, a tribe disposed to serve, for he bowed his shoulders to bear, *Gen. xlix. 14, 15.* yet one of that tribe is here raised up to rule, for those that humble themselves shall be exalted. He bore the name of him that was ancestor to the first family of that tribe; of the sons of Issachar Tola was the first, *Gen. xlii. 13. Numb. xxiv. 23.* It signifies a worm, yet being the name of his ancestor he was not ashamed of it. Though he was of Issachar, yet when he was raised up to the government he came and dwelt in mount Ephraim, which was more in the heart of the country, that the people might the more conveniently resort to him for judgment. He judged Israel twenty-three years, *ver. 2.* kept things in good order, but did not any thing very memorable.

2. Jair was a Gileadite, so was his next successor Jephthah, both of that half tribe of Manasseh, which lay on the other side Jordan; though they seem separated from their brethren, yet God took care that while the honour of the government was shifted from tribe to tribe, and before it settled in Judah, that they who lay remote should sometimes share in it, putting more abundant honour on that part which lacked. Jair bore the name of a very famous man of the same tribe, who in Moses's time was very active in reducing this country, *Numb. xxxii. 41. Josh. xiii. 30.* That which is chiefly remarkable concerning this Jair is the increase and honour of his family, he had thirty sons, *ver. 4.* And (1.) They had good preferments, for they rode on thirty ass colts, i. e. they were judges itinerant, that as deputies to their father rode from place to place in their several circuits to administer justice. We find afterwards that Samuel made his sons judges, though he could not make them good ones, *1 Sam. xiii. 1, 2, 3.* (2.) They had good possessions; every one a city, out of those that were called from their ancestor, of the same name with their father, Havoth-jair, the villages of Jair; yet they are all called cities, either because those young gentlemen to whom they were assigned, enlarged and fortified them, and so improved them into cities; or because they were as well pleased with their lot in those country towns, as if they had been cities in compact together, and fenced with gates and bars. Villages are cities to a contented mind.

6. And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him. 7. ¶ And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon. 8. And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel eighteen years, all the children of Israel that were on the other side Jordan, in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead. 9. Moreover, the children of Ammon passed over Jordan, to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim: so that Israel was sore distressed.

While those two Judges Tola and Jair presided in the affairs of Israel things went well, but afterwards,

1. Israel returned to their idolatry, that sin which did most easily beset them, *ver. 6.* they did evil again in the sight of the Lord, from whom they were unaccountably bent to backslide, as a foolish people and unwise. (1.) They worshipped many gods; not only their old demons Baalim and Ashtaroth, which the Canaanites had worshipped; but, as if they would proclaim their folly to all their neighbours, they served the gods of Syria, Zidon, Moab, Ammon, and the Philistines. It looks as if the chief trade of Israel were to import deities from all countries. It is hard to say, whether it was more impious or impolitic to do this. By introducing these foreign deities they rendered themselves mean and despicable, for no nation that had any sense of honour changed their gods. Much of the wealth of Israel we may suppose was carried out, in offerings to the temples of the deities in the several countries from whence they came, on which, as their mother churches, their temples in Israel were expected to own their independance; the priests and devotees of those sorry deities would follow their gods, no doubt, in crowds into the land of Israel, and if they could not live in their own country would take root there, and so strangers would devour their strength. If they did it in compliment to their neighbour nations, and to ingratiate themselves with them, justly were they disappointed, for those nations, which

which by their wicked arts they sought to make their friends, by the righteous judgments of God became their enemies and oppressors: *In quo quis peccat, in eo punitur.* (2.) They did not so much as admit the God of Israel to be one of those many deities they worshipped, but quite cast him off, they *forsook the Lord and served not him* at all. Those that think to serve both God and mammon, will soon come intirely to forsake God, and to serve mammon only. If God have not all the heart, he will soon have none of it.

2. God renewed his judgments upon them, bringing them under the power of oppressing enemies. Had they fallen into the hands of the Lord immediately, they might have found that *his mercies were great*, but God let them fall into the hands of man, whose tender mercies are cruel; he sold them into the hands of the Philistines that lay south-west of Canaan, and of the Ammonites that lay north-west, both at the same time; so that between those two millstones they were miserably crushed, as the original word is, *ver. 8.* for oppressed. God had appointed that if any of the cities of Israel should revolt to idolatry, the rest should make war upon them and cut them off, *Deut. xiii. 12, &c.* they had been jealous enough in that matter, almost to an extreme, in the case of the altar set up by the two tribes and a half, *Josh. xxii.* but now they were grown so very bad, that when one city was infected with idolatry the next took the infection, and instead of punishing it, imitated and out-did it; and therefore since they that should have been revengers to execute wrath on them that did this evil, were themselves guilty, or bore the sword in vain, God brought the neighbour nations upon them to chastise them for their apostasy.

The oppression of Israel by the Ammonites, the posterity of Lot, was, 1. Very long, it continued eighteen years. Some make those years to be part of the judgeship of Jair, who could not prevail to reform and deliver Israel as he would. Others make them to commence at the death of Jair, which seems the more probable, because that part of Israel which was most infested by the Ammonites was Gilead, Jair's own country, which we cannot suppose to have suffered so much while he was living, but that that part at least would be reformed and protected. 2. Very grievous, they vexed them and oppressed them. It was a great vexation to be oppressed by such a despicable people as the children of Ammon were. They began with those tribes that lay next them on the other side Jordan, here called the land of the Amorites, *ver. 8.* because the Israelites were so wretchedly degenerated, and had made themselves so like the heathen, that they were become in a manner perfect Amorites, *Ezek. xvi. 3.* Or, because by their sin they forfeited their title to this land, so that it might justly be looked upon as the land of the Amorites again, from whom they took it. But by degrees they pushed forward, came over Jordan, and invaded Judah, and Benjamin, and Ephraim, *ver. 9.* three of the most famous tribes of Israel, yet thus insulted, when they had forsaken God, and unable to make head against the invader. Now the threatening was fulfilled, that they should be *gleaned before their enemies*, and should have no power to stand before them, *Lev. xxvi. 17—37.* Their ways and their doings procure this to themselves; they are sadly degenerated, and so they come to be sorely distressed.

10. ¶ And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim. 11. And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? 12. The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites did oppress you, and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand. 13. Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods, wherefore I will deliver you no more. 14. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation. 15. ¶ And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned, do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee, deliver us only, we pray thee, this day. 16. And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel. 17. Then the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in Gilead: and the children of Israel assembled themselves together, and encamped at Mizpeh. 18. And the people and princes of Gilead said one to another, What man is he that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

Here is, 1. An humble confession which Israel makes to God in their distress, *ver. 10.* Now they own themselves guilty like a malefactor upon the rack, and promise reformation like a child under the rod. They did not only complain of the distress, but acknowledged it was their own sin that brought them into the distress, therefore God was righteous, and they had no reason to repine. They confess their omissions, for in them their sin began, we have forsaken our God; and their commissions, we have served Baalim, and herein have done foolishly, treacherously, and very wickedly.

2. An humbling message which God thereupon sends to Israel, whether by an angel, as *chap. ii. 1.* or by a prophet, as *chap. vi. 8.* is not certain. It was kind that God took notice of their cry, and did not turn a deaf ear to it, and send them no answer at all; it was kind likewise that when they began to repent, he sent them such a message as was proper to further and promote their repentance, that they might be qualified and prepared for deliverance. Now in this message, (1.) He upbraids them with their great ingratitude, minds them of the great things he had done for them, delivering them from such and such enemies; the Egyptians first, out of whose land they were rescued, the Amorites whom they conquered, and into whose land they entered; and since their settlement there, when the Ammonites had joined with the Moabites to oppress them, *chap. iii. 13.* when the Philistines were vexatious in the days of Shamgar, and afterwards other enemies had given them trouble, upon their petition God had wrought many a great salvation for them, *ver. 11, 12.* Of their being oppressed by the Zidonians and the Maonites we read not elsewhere: God had in justice corrected them, and in mercy delivered them, and therefore might have expected that either for fear, or for love, they would have stuck to him and his service; well therefore might the word cut them to the heart, *ver.*

13. yet ye have forsaken me that have brought you out of your troubles, and served other gods that brought you into your troubles. Thus did they forsake their own mercies for their own delusions. (2.) He shews them how justly he might now abandon them to ruin, by abandoning them to the gods that they had served. To awaken them to a thorough repentance and reformation, he lets them see, 1. Their folly in serving Baalim; they had been at a vast expence to obtain the favour of such gods as could not help them, then when they had most need of their help. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen, *ver. 14.* try what they can do for you now; you have worshipped them as gods, try if they have now either a divine power, or a divine goodness to be employed for you; you paid your homage to them as your kings and lords, try if they will now protect you; you brought your sacrifices of praise to their altars as your benefactors, imagining that they gave you your corn and wine and oil, but a friend indeed will be a friend at need, what stead will their favour stand you in now? Note, It is necessary in true repentance, that there be a full conviction of the utter insufficiency of all things to help us and do us any kindness, which we have idolized and set upon the throne in our hearts in competition with God. We must be convinced that the pleasures of sense, on which we have doted, cannot be our satisfaction, nor the wealth of the word which we have coveted be our portion, that we cannot be happy or easy any where but in God. 2. Their misery and danger in forsaking God. See what a pass you have brought yourselves to; now you can expect no other but that I should say, *I will deliver you no more*, and what will become of you then? *ver. 13.* This he tells them not only as what he might do, but as what he would do if they rested in a confession of what they had done amiss, and did not put away their idols, and amend for the future.

2. An humble submission which Israel hereupon made to God's justice, with an humble application to his mercy, *ver. 15.* The children of Israel met together it is likely in a solemn assembly at the door of the tabernacle, received the impressions of the message God had sent them, were not driven by it to despair, though it was very threatening, but resolved to lie at God's feet, and if they perish they will perish there. They not only repeat their confession, *we have sinned*; but, 1. They surrender themselves to God's justice, *do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee.* Hereby they own that they deserved the severest tokens of God's displeasure, and were sure he could do them no wrong whatever he laid upon them; they humbled themselves under his mighty and heavy hand, and accept of the punishment of their iniquity, which Moses had made the condition of God's return in mercy to them, *Lev. xxvi. 41.* Note, True penitents dare and will refer themselves to God to correct them as he thinks fit, knowing that their sin is highly malignant in its deserts, and that God is not rigorous or extreme in his demands. 2. They supplicate for God's mercy, and implore that, *deliver us only we pray thee this day* from this enemy. They acknowledge what they deserved, yet pray to God not to deal with them according to their deserts. Note, We must submit to God's justice, with a hope in his mercy.

3. A blessed reformation set on foot hereupon. They brought forth fruits meet for repentance, *ver. 16.* they put away the gods of strangers, (as the word is) strange gods, and worshipped by those nations that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and to the covenants of promise, and they served the Lord. Need drove them to him. They knew it was to no purpose to go to the gods whom they had served, and therefore return to the God whom they had slighted. This is true repentance not only for sin, but from sin.

5. God's gracious return in mercy to them, which is expressed here very tenderly, *ver. 16.* his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel. Not that there is any grief in God, he has infinite joy and happiness in himself which cannot be broken in upon by either the sins or the miseries of his creatures; nor that there is any change in God, he is in one mind, and who can turn him? But his goodness is his glory; by it he proclaims his name, and magnifies it above all his name: and he is pleased to put himself into the relation of a father to his people that are in covenant with him, so he is pleased to represent his goodness to them, by the compassions of a father towards his children; for as he is the Father of lights, so he is the Father of mercies; as the disobedience and misery of a child is a grief to a tender father, and makes him feel very sensibly from his natural affection; so the provocation of God's people are a grief to him, *Psal. xc. 10.* he is broken with their *whorish heart*, *Ezek. vi. 9.* their troubles also are a grief to him; so he is pleased to speak when he is pleased to appear for the deliverance of his people; changing his way and method of proceeding, as tender parents when they begin to relent towards their children, with whom they have been displeased. Such are the tender mercies of our God, and so far is he from having any pleasure in the death of sinners.

6. Things are now working towards their deliverance from the Ammonites oppression, *ver. 17, 18.* God had said, I will deliver you no more, but now they are not what they were, they are other men, they are new men, and now he will deliver them. That threatening was denounced to convince and humble them, and now it had taken its desired effect, it is revoked in order to their deliverance. (1.) The Ammonites are hardened to their own ruin, they gathered together in one body, that they might be destroyed at one blow, *Rev. xvi. 16.* (2.) The Israelites are animated and spirited to their own rescue. They assembled likewise, *ver. 17.* During their eighteen years oppression, as in their former servitudes, they were run down by their enemies, because they would not incorporate; each family, city, or tribe, would stand by itself, and act independently, and so they all became an easy prey to the oppressors, for want of a due sense of a common interest to cement them; but whenever they got together they did well; so they did here. When God's Israel become as one man to advance a common good, and oppose a common enemy, what difficulty can stand before them? The people and princes of Gilead being met, consult first about a general, that should command in chief against the Ammonites. Hitherto most of the deliverers of Israel had an extraordinary call to the office, as Ehud, Barak, Gideon; but the next is to be called in a more common way, by a convention of the state, who enquired out a fit man to command their army, found out one admirably well qualified for the purpose, and God owned their choice by putting his Spirit upon him, *chap. xi. 29.* So that this instance is of use for direction and encouragement in after-ages, when extraordinary calls are no longer to be expected. Let such be impartially chosen to public trust and power, whom God has qualified, and then God will graciously own those who are thus chosen.

C H A P. XI.

This chapter gives us the history of Jephthah, another of Israel's judges, and numbered among the worthies of the Old Testament, that by faith did great things, *Heb. xi. 32.* though he had not such an extraordinary call as the rest there mentioned had. Here is, 1. The disadvantages of his rise and original, *ver. 1—3.* 2. The Gileadites choice of him to be commander in chief against the Ammonites, and

and the terms he made with them, ver. 4—11. 3. His treaty with the king of Ammon, about the rights of the two nations, that the matter might be determined if possible without bloodshed, ver. 12—23. 4. His war with the Ammonites, which he enters upon with a solemn vow, ver. 29—31. prosecutes with bravery, ver. 32. and ends with a glorious victory, ver. 33. 5. The straits he was brought into at his return to his own house by the vow he had made, ver. 34—40.

1. **N**OW Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah. 2. And Gilead's wife bare him sons, and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house, for thou art the son of a strange woman. 3. Then Jephthah fled from his brethren and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him.

The princes and people of Gilead we left, in the close of the foregoing chapter, consulting about the choice of a general, being come to this resolve, that whoever would undertake to lead their forces against the children of Ammon, should by common consent be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead. The enterprize was difficult, and it was fit so great an encouragement as this should be proposed to him that would undertake it. Now all agreed that Jephthah, the Gileadite, was a mighty man of valour, and very fit for their purpose, none so fit as he, but he lay under three disadvantages.

1. He was the son of an harlot, ver. 1. of a strange woman, ver. 2. one that was neither a wife nor a concubine; some think his mother was a Gentile; so Josephus, who calls him a stranger by the mother's side. An Ishmaelite, say the Jews. If his mother was a harlot, that was not his fault, however it was his disgrace. Men ought not to be reproached with any of the infelicities of their parentage or extraction, so long as they are endeavouring by their personal merits to roll away the reproach. The son of a harlot, if born again, born from above, shall be accepted of God, and be as welcome as any other to the glorious liberties of his children. Jephthah could not read in the law the brand there put on the Ammonites, the enemies he was to grapple with, that they should not enter the congregation of the Lord, but in the same paragraph he met with that which looked black upon himself, that a bastard should be in like manner excluded, *Deut. xxiii. 2, 3*. But if that law means, as most probable it doth, only those that are born of incest, not of fornication, he was not within the reach of it.

2. He had been driven his country by his brethren. His father's legitimate children, insisting upon the rigour of the law, thrust him out from having any inheritance with them; without any consideration had of his extraordinary qualifications, which merited a dispensation, and would have made him a mighty strength and ornament of their family, if they had overlooked his being a by-blow, and admitted him to a child's part, ver. 2. One would not have thought this abandoned youth was intended to be Israel's deliverer and judge, but God often humbles those whom he designs to exalt, and makes that stone the head of the corner which the builders refused; so Joseph, Moses, and David, the three most eminent of the shepherds of Israel, were all thrust out by men, before they were called of God to their great offices.

3. He had in his exile headed a rabble, ver. 3. Being driven out by his brethren, his great soul would not suffer him either to dig, or beg, but by his sword he must live; and being soon noted for his bravery, those that were reduced to such straits, and animated by such a spirit, lifted themselves under him. Vain men they are here called, that is, men that had run through their estates and were to seek for a livelihood, those went out with him, not to rob or plunder, but to hunt wild beasts, and perhaps to make incursions upon those countries which Israel was intitled to, but were not as yet come to the possession of, or were some way or other injured by.

This is the man that must save Israel. That people had by their idolatry made themselves children of whoredoms, and aliens from God and his covenant, and therefore, though God upon their repentance will deliver them, yet, to mortify them and mind them of their sin, he chooseth to do it by a bastard and an exile.

4. ¶ And it came to pass in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel. 5. And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob: 6. And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon. 7. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house? And why are ye come unto me now, when ye are in distress? 8. And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead. 9. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the LORD deliver them before me, shall I be your head? 10. And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The LORD be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words. 11. Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh.

Here is, 1. The distress which the children of Israel were in upon the Ammonites invasion of their country, ver. 4. Probably this was the same invasion with that mentioned, chap. x. 17. When the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in or against Gilead. And those words in process of time, refer to what goes immediately before of the expulsion of No. XXXVIII.

Jephthah; many days after he had been thus thrust out in disgrace was he fetched back again with honour.

2. The court which the elders made to Jephthah hereupon to come and help them. They did not write or send a messenger to him, but went themselves to fetch him, resolving to have no denial, and the exigency of the case was such as would admit no delay. Their errand to him was, ver. 6. Come, and be our captain. They knew none among themselves that was able to undertake that great trust, but do in effect confess themselves unfit for it; they knew him to be a stout man, and inured to the sword, and therefore he must be the man. See how God prepares men for the service he designs them for, and makes their troubles work for their advancement. If Jephthah had not been put to his shifts by his brethren's unkindness, he had not had such occasion as that gave him to exercise and improve his martial genius, and to signalize himself and become famous, *Out of the eater comes forth meat*. The children of Israel were assembled and encamped, chap. x. 17. But an army without a general, is like a body without a head, therefore, Come, say they, and be our captain that we may fight. See the necessity of government; though they were hearty enough in the cause, yet they owned they could not fight without a captain to command them. So necessary is it to all societies, that there be a *pars imperans*, and a *pars subdita*, some to rule, and others to obey, that every community should humbly beg the favour of being commanded, rather than that every man should be his own master. Blessed be God for government, for a good government.

3. The objection Jephthah makes against accepting their offer, ver. 7. Did ye not hate me, and expel me? It should seem that his brethren that were some of these elders, or these elders by suffering his brethren to abuse him, and not righting him as they ought to have done, for their business is to defend the poor and fatherless, *Psal. lxxxii. 3, 4*. had made themselves guilty of the expulsion, and he might justly charge them with it. Magistrates that have power to protect those that are injured, if they do not do them right, really do them wrong. You hated me and expelled me, and therefore how can I believe that you are sincere in this proposal? And how can you expect that I should do you any service? Not but that Jephthah was very willing to serve his country, but he thought fit to give them a hint of their former unkindnesses to him, that they might repent of their sin in using him ill, and might for the future be the more sensible of their obligations. Thus Joseph humbled his brethren before he made himself known to them. The particular case between the Gileadites and Jephthah was a resemblance of the general state of the case between Israel and God at this time: they had thrust God out by their idolatries, yet in their distress begged his help, he told them how justly he might have rejected them, and yet graciously delivered them. So did Jephthah. Many slight God and good men till they come to be in distress, and then they are desirous of God's mercy, and good men's prayers.

4. Their urgency with him to accept the government they offer him, ver. 8. Therefore because we formerly did thee that wrong, and to shew thee that we repent of it, and would gladly atone for it, we turn again to thee now, to put such an honour upon thee as shall balance that indignity. Let this instance be, (1.) A caution to us not to despise or trample upon any because they are mean, or to be injurious to any that we have advantage against, because whatever we think of them now, the time may come when we may have need of them, and would be glad to be beholden to them. It is our wisdom to make no man our enemy, because we know not how soon our distresses may be such, as that we may be highly concerned to make him our friend. (2.) An encouragement to men of worth that are slighted and ill-treated, let them bear it with meekness and cheerfulness, and leave it to God to make their light shine out of obscurity. Fuller's remark on this story in his *Pilgrimage* is this: *Virtue once in an age will work her own advancement, and when such as hate it chance to need it, they will be forced to prefer it*, and then the honour will appear the brighter.

5. The bargain he makes with them. He had mentioned the injuries they had formerly done him, but perceiving their repentance, his spirit was too great and generous to mention them any more. God had forgiven Israel the affronts they had done him, chap. x. 17. and therefore Jephthah will forgive. Only he thinks it prudent to make his bargain wisely for the future, since he deals with men that he had reason to distrust. (1.) He puts them a fair question, ver. 9. He speaks not with too much confidence of his success, knowing how justly God might suffer the Ammonites to prevail for the farther punishment of Israel; but puts an if upon it. Nor doth he speak with any confidence at all in himself, if he doth succeed, it is the Lord that delivers them into his hand, intending hereby to mind his countrymen to look up to God, as arbitrator of the controversy, and the giver of victory, for so he did. Now if by the blessing of God, I come home a conqueror, tell me plainly, shall I be your head? If I deliver you under God, shall I, under him, reform you? The same question is put to those who desire salvation by Christ. If he save you, will you be willing that he shall rule you? For on no other terms will he save you; if he make you happy, shall he make you holy? If he be your helper, shall he be your head? (2.) They immediately gave him a positive answer, ver. 10. we will do according to thy words, command us in war, and thou shalt command us in peace. They do not take time to consider of it, the case was too plain to need a debate, and the necessity too pressing to admit a delay; they knew they had power to conclude a treaty for those whom they represented, and therefore bound it with an oath, *The Lord be witness between us*. They appeal to God's omniscience as the judge of their present sincerity, and to his justice as an avenger, if afterwards they should prove false. *The Lord be a hearer*, so the word is. Whatever we speak, it concerns us to remember that God is a hearer, and to speak accordingly. Thus was the original contract ratified between Jephthah and the Gileadites, which all Israel it should seem agreed to afterwards, for it is said, chap. xii. 7. he judged Israel. He thereupon went with them, ver. 11. to the place where they were all assembled, chap. x. 17. and there by common consent, they made him head and captain, and so ratified the bargain their representatives had made with him, that he should be not only captain now, but head for life. Jephthah to obtain this little honour was willing to expose his life for them, chap. xii. 3. and shall we be discouraged in our Christian warfare by any of the difficulties we may meet with in it, when Christ himself has promised a crown of life to him that overcometh?

6. Jephthah's pious acknowledgment of God in this great affair, ver. 11. he uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh. That is, upon his elevation he presently retired to his devotions, and in prayer spread the whole matter before God, both his choice to the office, and his execution of the office, as one that had his eye ever towards the Lord, and would do nothing without him, that leaned not to his own understanding or courage, but depended on God and his favour. He utters before God all his thoughts and cares in this matter, for he gives us leave to be free with him. (1.) Lord, the people have made me their head, wilt thou confirm the choice, and own me as thy people's head under thee, and for thee? God justly complains of Israel, *Isa. viii. 4*. they have set up kings, but not by me; Lord, saith Jephthah, I will be no head of their making without thee. I will not accept

the government unless thou give leave. Had Abimelech done this he might have prospered. (2.) Lord, they have made me their captain, to go before them in this war with the Ammonites. Shall I have thy presence? wilt thou go before me? If not, carry me not up hence? Lord, satisfy me in the justice of the cause. Assure me of success in the enterprise. This is a rare example to be imitated by all, particularly by great ones; in all our ways let us acknowledge God; seek his favour; ask counsel at his mouth, and take him along with us; so shall we make our way prosperous. Thus Jephthah opened the campaign with prayer. It was likely to end gloriously which began piously.

12. ¶ And Jephthah sent messengers unto the king of the children of Ammon, saying, What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come against me, to fight in my land? 13. And the king of the children of Ammon answered unto the messengers of Jephthah, Because Israel took away my land when they came up out of Egypt, from Arnon, even unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan: now therefore restore those lands again peaceably. 14. And Jephthah sent messengers again unto the king of the children of Ammon: 15. And said unto him, Thus saith Jephthah, Israel took not away the land of Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon: 16. But when Israel came up from Egypt, and walked through the wilderness, unto the Red-sea, and came to Kadesh; 17. Then Israel sent messengers unto the king of Edom, saying, Let me, I pray thee, pass through thy land: but the king of Edom would not hearken thereto. And in like manner they sent unto the king of Moab; but he would not consent: and Israel abode in Kadesh. 18. Then they went along through the wilderness, and compassed the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and came by the east-side of the land of Moab, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, but came not within the border of Moab: for Arnon was the border of Moab. 19. And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon, king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon; and Israel said unto him, Let us pass, we pray thee, through thy land unto my place. 20. But Sihon trusted not Israel to pass through his coast: but Sihon gathered all his people together and pitched in Jahaz, and fought against Israel. 21. And the LORD God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they smote them: so Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country. 22. And they possessed all the coasts of the Amorites, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and from the wilderness even unto Jordan. 23. So now the LORD God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and shouldest thou possess it? 24. Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess: So whomsoever the LORD our God shall drive out from before us, them will we possess. 25. And now art thou any thing better than Balak the son of Zippor king of Moab? did he ever strive against Israel, or did he ever fight against them, 26. While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and in Arocr and her towns, and in all the cities that be along by the coasts of Arnon, three hundred years? why therefore did ye not recover them within that time? 27. Wherefore I have not sinned against thee, but thou dost me wrong to war against me: the LORD the Judge be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon. 28. Howbeit, the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah which he sent him.

We have here the treaty between Jephthah, now judge of Israel, and the king of the Ammonites, who is not named; that the controversy between the two nations might, if possible, be accommodated without the effusion of blood.

1. Jephthah as one having authority, sent to the king of Ammon, who in this war was the aggressor, to demand his reasons for invading the land of Israel, *ver.* 12. *Why art thou come to fight against me in my land?* Had I come first into thy land to disturb thee in thy possession, that had been reason enough for fighting against me, for how must force be repelled but by force; but what hast thou to do to come thus in a hostile manner into my land? so he calls it in the name both of God and Israel. Now this fair demand shews, (1.) That Jephthah did not delight in war, though he were a mighty man of valour, but was willing to prevent it by a peaceable accommodation. If he could by reason persuade the invaders to retire, he would not compel them to do it by the sword. War should be the last remedy, not to be used till all other methods of ending matters in variance have been tried in vain. *Ratio ultima regum.* This rule should be observed in going to law. The sword of justice as well as the sword of war must not be appealed to, till the contending parties have first endeavoured by gentler means to understand one another, and accommodate matters in variance, *1 Cor.* vi. 1. (2.) That Jephthah did delight in equity, and designed no other but to do justice. If the children of Ammon could convince him that Israel had done them wrong, he was ready to restore the rights of the Ammonites. If not, it was plain by their invasion they did Israel wrong, and he was ready to maintain the rights of the Israelites. A sense of justice should guide and govern us in all our undertakings.

2. The king of the Ammonites now gives in his demand, which he should have published before he had invaded Israel, *ver.* 13. His pretence is, If-

rael took away my land long since, now therefore restore those lands. We have reason to think the Ammonites, when they made this descent upon Israel, meant no other but to spoil and plunder the country, and enrich themselves with the prey, as they had done formerly with Eglon, *chap.* iii. 13. when no such demand as this was made, though the matter was then afresh; but when Jephthah demanded the cause of their quarrel, and they could not for shame own what was their true intent and meaning, some old musty records were searched, or some ancient traditions enquired into, and from them this reason trumped up to serve the present turn, for a colourable pretence of equity in the invasion. Even those that do the greatest wrong, yet have such a conviction in their consciences of justice, that they would seem to do right. *Restore those lands.* See upon what uncertain terms we hold our worldly possessions, what we think we have the surest hold of, may be challenged from us, and wrested out of our hands. Those that are got to the heavenly Canaan, need not fear having their titles questioned.

3. Jephthah gives in a very full and satisfactory answer to this demand, shewing it to be altogether unjust and unreasonable, and that the Ammonites had no title to this country that lay between the rivers Arnon and Jabbok, now in the possession of the tribes of Reuben and Gad. As one very well versed in the history of this country, he shews,

1. That Israel never took any land away, either from the Moabites or Ammonites; he puts them together because they were brethren, the children of Lot, near neighbours, and of united interests, having the same God, Chemosh, and perhaps sometimes the same king. The lands in question Israel took away, not from the Moabites or Ammonites, they had particular orders from God not to meddle with them, or any thing they had, *Deut.* ii. 9—19. and religiously observed their orders; but they found them in the possession of Sihon king of the Amorites, and out of his hand they took them justly and honourably, as he will shew afterwards.

If the Amorites, before Israel came into that country, had taken these lands from the Moabites or Ammonites, as it should seem they had, *Numb.* xxi. 26. *Josh.* xiii. 25. Israel was not concerned to enquire into that, or answer for it. If the Ammonites had lost these lands, and their title to them; the children of Israel were under no obligation to recover the possession for them. Their business was to conquer for themselves, not for other people. This is his first plea, Not guilty of the trespass.

2. That they were so far from invading the property of any other nations, but only of the devoted posterity of cursed Canaan, (one of the branches of which the Ammonites were, *Gen.* x. 16.) that they would not so much as force a passage through the country, either of the Edomites, the seed of Esau, or of the Moabites, the seed of Lot, but even after a very tedious march through the wilderness, with which they were sadly tired, (*ver.* 16.) when the king of Edom first, and afterwards the king of Moab, denied them the courtesy of a way through their country (*ver.* 17.) rather than give them any offence or annoyance, weary as they were, they put themselves to the further fatigue of compassing both the land of Edom, and that of Moab, and came not within the border of either, *ver.* 18. Note. Those that carry themselves inoffensively may take the comfort of it, and plead against those that charge them with injustice and wrong-doing. *Our righteousness will answer for us in the time to come, Gen.* xxx. 23. and will put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, *1 Pet.* ii. 12.

3. That in that war in which they took this land out of the hands of Sihon king of the Amorites, he was the aggressor, and not they, *ver.* 19, 20. They sent an humble petition to him, for leave to go through his land, willing to give him any security for their good behaviour in their march, *Let us pass (say they) unto my place, i. e. to the land of Canaan,* that is the only place we call ours, and to which we are pressing forwards, not designing a settlement here. But Sihon not only denied them this courtesy, as Edom and Moab had done, (had he only done so, who knows but Israel might have gone about some other way) but he mustered all his forces, and fought against Israel, *ver.* 20. Not only shut them out of his own land, but would have cut them off from the face of the earth, *Numb.* xxi. 23—24. aimed at nothing less than their ruin, *ver.* 20. Israel therefore in their war with him stood in their own just and necessary defence, and therefore having routed his army, might justly, in further revenge of the injury, seize his country as forfeited; so Israel came to the possession of this country, and doubt not but to make good their title to it; and it is very unreasonable for the Ammonites to question their title, for the Amorites were the inhabitants of that country, and it was purely their land and their coasts that the Israelites then made themselves masters of, *ver.* 21, 22.

4. He pleads a grant from the crown, and claims under that, *ver.* 23, 24. It was not Israel, they were fatigued with a long march, and were not fit for action so soon; but it was the Lord God of Israel, who is king of nations, whose the earth is, and the fulness thereof, he it was that dispossessed the Amorites, and planted Israel in their room. God gave it them by an express and particular conveyance, such as vested the title in them, which they might make good against all the world, *Deut.* ii. 24. *I have given into thy hand Sihon and his land,* he gave it them, by giving them a complete victory over the present occupants, notwithstanding the great disadvantages they were under: can you think that God gave it us in such an extraordinary manner, with design that we should return it to the Moabites or Ammonites again? no, we put a higher value upon God's favours, than to part with them so easily. To corroborate this plea, he urges him with an argument *ad hominem, Wilt thou not possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee?* He not only appeals to the common resolutions of men, to hold their own against all the world, but to the common religion of the nations, which they thought obliged them to make much of that which their gods gave them. Not that Jephthah thought Chemosh a god, only he is thy god, and the worshippers, even of those dunghill deities that could do neither good nor evil, yet thought themselves beholden to them for all they had, *Hos.* ii. 12. *These are my rewards which my lovers have given me:* and see *Judg.* xvi. 24. and make this a reason why they would hold it fast, that their gods gave it them. This thou thinkest a good title, and shall not we? The Ammonites had dispossessed those that dwelt in their land before them, they thought they did it by the help of Chemosh their god, but it was really Jehovah the God of Israel that did it for them, as is expressly said, *Deut.* ii. 19—21. Now (saith Jephthah) we have as good a title to our country as you have to yours. Note, One instance of the honour and respect we owe to God, as our God, is rightly to possess that which he gives us to possess, receive it from him, use it for him, keep it for his sake, and part with it when he calls for it. He has given it us to possess, not to enjoy. He himself only must be enjoyed.

5. He pleads prescription. (1.) Their title had not been disputed when they first entered upon it, *ver.* 25. Balak that was then king of Moab, from whom the greatest part of these lands had been taken by the Amorites, and who was most concerned and best able to oppose us, if he had had any thing to object against our settlement there, yet sat still, and never offered to strive against Israel. He knew that for his own part he had fairly lost it to the Amorites, and was not able to recover it, and could not but acknowledge that Israel had fairly won it of the Amorites, and therefore all his care was to secure what was left, he never pretended a title to what was lost. See

Numb. xx. 2, 3. He then acquiesced in God's way of disposing kingdoms, and wilt not thou now? (2.) Their possessions had never yet been disturbed, *ver. 26.* He pleads that they had kept this country as their own now about three hundred years, and the Ammonites in all that time had never attempted to take it from them, no, not when they had it in their power to oppress them, *chap. iii. 12, 13.* So that supposing their title had not been clear at the first, (which yet he had proved it was) yet no continual claim being made by so many descents, the entry of the children of Ammon without doubt was barred for ever. A title so long unquestioned, shall be presumed unquestionable.

6. By these arguments Jephthah justifies himself and his own cause, *ver. 27.* I have not sinned against thee in taking or keeping what I have no right to, if I had, I would instantly make restitution; and condemns the Ammonites, *thou dost me wrong to war against me,* and must expect to speed accordingly. It seems to me an evidence, that the children of Israel, in the days of their prosperity and power (for some such days they had in the times of the judges) had carried themselves very inoffensively to all their neighbours, and had not been vexatious, or oppressing to them (either by way of reprisal, or under colour of propagating their religion) that the king of the Ammonites, when he would seek an occasion of quarrelling with them, was forced to look three hundred years back for a pretence. It becomes the people of God thus to be blameless and harmless, and without rebuke.

7. For the deciding of the controversy, he puts himself upon God and his sword, and the king of Ammon joined issue with him, *ver. 27, 28.* *The Lord the Judge be judge this day.* With this solemn reference of the matter to the judge of heaven and earth, he designs either to deter the Ammonites from proceeding and oblige them to retire, when they saw the right of the cause was against them, or to justify himself in subduing them, if they should go on. Note, War is an appeal to heaven, to God the Judge of all, to whom the issues of it belongs. If doubtful rights be disputed, he is thereby requested to determine them. If manifest rights be invaded or denied, he is thereby applied to for the vindicating of what is just, and the punishing of wrong. As the sword of justice was made for lawless and disobedient persons, *1 Tim. i. 9.* so was the sword of war made for lawless and disobedient princes and nations. In war therefore the eye must be ever up to God, and it must always be thought a dangerous thing to desire, or expect that God should patronize unrighteousness.

Neither Jephthah's apology, nor his appeal, wrought upon the king of the children of Ammon; they had found the sweet of the spoil of Israel, in the eighteen years wherein they had oppressed them, *chap. x. 8.* and hoped now to make themselves masters of the tree which they had so often enriched themselves with the fruit of. He hearkened not to the words of Jephthah, his heart being hardened to his destruction.

29. ¶ Then the spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon. 30. And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, 31. Then it shall be, That whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering. 32. ¶ So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them, and the LORD delivered them into his hands. 33. And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, *even* twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel. 34. ¶ And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances, and she was his only child: besides her he had neither son nor daughter. 35. And it came to pass when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter, thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back. 36. And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, *even* of the children of Ammon. 37. And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: Let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows. 38. And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. 39. And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel, 40. That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

We have here Jephthah triumphing in a glorious victory, but, as an allay to his joy, troubled and distressed by an unadvised vow.

1. Jephthah's victory was clear, and shines very bright, both to his honour, and to the honour of God, in his pleading, and God's in owning a righteous cause.

(1.) God gave him an excellent spirit, and he used it bravely; *ver. 29.* Then when it appeared by the people's unanimous choice of him for their leader, that he had so clear a call to engage, and by the obstinate deafness of the king of Ammon to the proposals of accommodation, that he had so just a cause to engage in, then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and very much advanced his natural faculties, endued him with power from

on high, and making him more bold and more wise than ever he had been, and more fired with a holy zeal against the enemies of his people. Hereby God confirmed him in his office, and assured him of success in his undertaking. Thus animated, he lofeth no time, but with an undaunted resolution takes the field. Particular notice is taken of the way by which he advanced towards the enemies camp, probably because the choice of it was an instance of that extraordinary conduct with which the Spirit of the Lord had furnished him; for those who sincerely walk after the Spirit shall be led forth the right way.

(2.) God gave him eminent success, and he bravely improved that too, *ver. 32.* *The Lord delivered the Ammonites into his hand,* and so gave judgment upon the appeal in favour of the righteous cause, and made those feel the force of war, that would not yield to the force of reason, for he sits in the throne, judging right. Jephthah lost not the advantages given him, but pursued and completed his victory, having routed their forces in the field, he pursued them to their cities, where he put to the sword all he found in arms, so as utterly to disable them to give Israel any molestation, *ver. 33.* But it doth not appear that he utterly destroyed the people, as Joshua had done those of the devoted nations, or that he offered to make himself master of the country, though their pretensions to the land of Israel might have given him colour to do so, only he took care that they should be effectually subdued. Though others attempting wrong to us, will justify us in the defence of our own right, yet it will not authorize us to do them wrong.

2. Jephthah's vow is dark, and much in the clouds. When he was going out from his own house upon this hazardous undertaking, in prayer to God for his presence with him, he makes a secret but solemn vow, or religious promise to God, that if God would graciously bring him back a conqueror, whosoever, or whatsoever should first come out of his house to meet him, it should be devoted to God, and offered up for a burnt-offering: at his return, tidings of his victory coming home before him, his own and only daughter meets him with the seasonable expressions of joy; this puts him into a great confusion, but there is no remedy: after she had taken some time to lament the loss of her own felicity, she cheerfully submitted to the performance of his vow.

Now, 1. There are several good lessons to be learned out of this story.

(1.) That there may be remainders of distrust and doubting even in the hearts of true and great believers. Jephthah had reason enough to be confident of success, especially when he found the Spirit of the Lord come upon him, and yet now it comes to the setting, he seems to hesitate, *ver. 30.* *If thou shalt without fail deliver them into my hand,* then I will do so and so. And perhaps the snare into which his vow brought him, was designed to correct the weakness of his faith, and a fond conceit he had that he could not promise himself a victory, unless he proffered something considerable to be given to God in lieu of it. (2.) That yet it is very good when we are in the pursuit or expectation of any mercy, to make vows to God of some instance of acceptable service to him, not as a purchase of the favour we desire, but as an expression of our gratitude to him, and the deep sense we will have of our obligations to render according to the benefit done to us. The matter of such a singular vow (*Lev. xxvii. 2.*) must be something that has a plain and direct tendency, either to the advancement of God's glory, and the interests of his kingdom among men, or to the furtherance of ourselves in his service, and in that which is antecedently our duty. (3.) That we have greater need to be very cautious, and well advised in the making of such vows, lest by indulging a present pang even of pious zeal, we entangle our own consciences, involve ourselves in perplexities, and are forced at last to say before the angel that it was an error, *Ecc. v. 2-6.* *It is a snare to a man hastily to devour that which is holy,* without due consideration, (*quid valeant humeri, quid ferre recusent*) and without inserting the needful provisos and limitations which might prevent the entanglement, and then after vows to make the enquiry which should have been made before, *Prov. xx. 25.* Let Jephthah's harm be our warning in this matter. See *Deut. xxiii. 22.* (4.) That what we have solemnly vowed to God we must conscientiously perform, if it be possible and lawful, though it be never so difficult and grievous to us. Jephthah's sense of the powerful obligation of his vow must always be ours, *ver. 35.* *I opened my mouth unto the Lord in a solemn vow, and I cannot go back,* i. e. I cannot recel the vow myself, it is too late, nor can any power on earth dispense with it, or give me up my bond. The thing was mine own, and in mine own power, *Acts v. 4.* but now it is not. *Vow and pay,* *Psal. lxxvi. 11.* We deceive ourselves if we think to mock God. If we apply this to the content we have solemnly given in our sacramental vows to the covenant of grace, made with poor sinners in Christ, what a powerful argument will it be against the sins we have by those vows bound ourselves out from, and what a strong inducement to the duties we have thereby bound ourselves up to, and what a ready answer to every temptation, *I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot go back,* I must therefore go forward, I have sworn, and I must, I will perform it. Let me not dare to play fast and loose with God. (5.) That it well becomes children, obediently and cheerfully to submit to their parents in the Lord, and particularly to comply with their pious resolutions for the honour of God, and the keeping up of religion in their families, though they be harsh and severe, as the Rechabites, who for many generations religiously observed the commands of Jonadab their father in forbearing wine, and Jephthah's daughter here, who for the satisfying of her father's conscience, and for the honour of God and her country, yielded herself as one devoted, *ver. 36.* *Do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth;* I know I am dear to thee, but am well content that God should be dearer. The father might disallow any vow made by the daughter, *Numb. xxx. 5.* but the daughter could not disallow or disannul, no, not such a vow as this made by the father. This magnifies the law of the fifth commandment.

(6.) That our friends' grievances should be our griefs. Where she went to bewail her hard fate, the virgins her companions, joined with her in her lamentations, *ver. 38.* With those of her own sex and age she used to associate, who, no doubt, now her father was of a sudden grown so great, expected shortly after his return to dance at her wedding, but were heavily disappointed, when they were called to retire to the mountains with her and share in her griefs. Those are unworthy the name of friends, that will only rejoice with us, and not weep with us. (7.) That heroic zeal for the honour of God and Israel, though allayed with infirmity and indifferetion, is worthy to be had in perpetual remembrance. It well became the daughters of Israel, by an annual solemnity to preserve the honourable memory of Jephthah's daughter, who made light even of her own life, like a noble heroine, when God had taken vengeance of Israel's enemies, *ver. 36.* Such a rare instance of one that preferred the public interest before life itself, was never to be forgotten. Her sex forbade her to follow her father to the war, and so to expose her life in battle, in lieu of which she hazards it much more (and perhaps apprehended that she did so, having some intimation of his vow, and did it designedly, for he tells her, *ver. 35.* *Thou hast brought me very low*) to grace his triumphs. So transported was she with the victory as a common benefit, that she was willing to be herself offered up as a thanksgiving for it, and would think her life well bestowed when laid down on so great an occasion. She thinks it an honour to die, not a sacrifice of atonement for the people's sins, (that honour was reserved for

for Christ only) but a sacrifice of acknowledgment for the people's mercies. (8.) From Jephthah's concern on this occasion we must learn not to think it strange if the day of our triumphs in this world proves upon some account or other the day of our griefs, and therefore must always rejoice with trembling; we hope for a day of triumph hereafter which will have no alloy.

2. Yet there are some difficult questions that do arise upon this story, which have very much employed the pens of learned men; I will say but little to them, because Mr. Poole has discussed them very fully in his English Annotations.

1. It is hard to say, what Jephthah did to his daughter in performance of his vow. 1. Some think he only shut her up for a nun, and that it being unlawful, according to one part of his vow (for they make it disjunctive) to offer her up for a burnt-offering; he thus according to the other part engaged her to be the Lord's, that is, totally to sequester herself from all the affairs of this life, and consequently from marriage, and to employ herself wholly in the acts of devotion all her days. That which countenances this opinion is that she is said to bewail her virginity, ver. 37, 38. and that she knew no man, ver. 39. But if he sacrificed her, it was proper enough for her to bewail not her death, because that was intended to be for the honour of God; and she would undergo it cheerfully, but that unhappy circumstance of it, which made it more grievous to her than to any other, because she was her father's only child, in whom he hoped his name and family would have been built up, that she was unmarried, and so left no issue to inherit her father's honour and estate; therefore that is it that is particularly taken notice of, ver. 34. that beside her he had neither son nor daughter. But that which makes me think Jephthah did not go about to satisfy his vow, or evade it rather, is, that we do not find any law, usage, or custom, in all the Old Testament, which doth in the least intimate that a single life was any branch or article of religion, or that any person, man or woman, was looked upon as the more holy, more the Lord's, or devoted to him, for living unmarried: it was no part of the law, either of the priests, or of the Nazarites. Deborah and Huldah, both prophetesses, are both of them particularly taken notice of to be married women. Besides, had she only been confined to a single life, she needed not to have desired these two months to bewail it in, she had had her whole life before her to do that, if she saw cause. Nor needed she to take such dear leave of her companions, for they that are of that opinion understand what is said, ver. 40. of their coming to talk with her, as our margin reads it, four days in a year. Therefore, 2. It seems more probable that he offered her up for a sacrifice, according to the letter of his vow, misunderstanding that law, which spoke of persons devoted by the curse of God, as if it were to be allied to such as were devoted by men's vows, *Lev. xxvii. 29. None devoted shall be redeemed, but shall surely be put to death*; and wanted to be better informed of the power the law gave him in this case to redeem her. Abraham's attempt to offer up Isaac, perhaps encouraged him, and made him think, if God would not accept this sacrifice which he had vowed, he would send an angel to stay his hand; as he did Abraham's; if she came out designedly to be made a sacrifice, as who knows but she might, perhaps he thought that would make the case plainer, *volenti non fit injuria*. He imagined, it may be, that where there was neither anger nor malice, there was no murder, and that his good intention would satisfy this bad action; and since he had made such a vow, he thought better to kill his daughter than break his vow; and let providence bear the blame that brought her forth to meet him.

2. But supposing that Jephthah did sacrifice his daughter, the question is whether he did well? (1.) Some justify him in it, and think he did well, and as one that preferred the honour of God before that which was dearest to him in this world. He is mentioned among the eminent believers, who by faith did great things, *Heb. xi. 32*. And this was one of the great things he did, it was done deliberately, and upon two months consideration and consultation. He is never blamed for it by any inspired writer. Though it highly exalts his paternal authority, yet it cannot justify any in doing the like, he was an extraordinary person, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him; many circumstances now unknown to us, might make this altogether extraordinary, and justify it, yet not so as that it might justify the like. Some learned men have made this sacrifice a figure of Christ the great sacrifice; he was of unspotted purity and innocency, as the chaste virgin: he was devoted to death by his Father, and so made a curse, or an anathema, for us, he submitted himself, as he did, to his Father's will, *not as I will, but as thou wilt*. But, (2.) Most condemn Jephthah, he did ill to make so rash a vow, and worse to perform it. He could not be bound by his vow to that which God had forbidden by the letter of the sixth commandment, *Thou shalt not kill*. God had forbidden human sacrifice, so that it was (saith Dr. Lightfoot) in effect a sacrifice to Molech. And, probably, the reason why it is left dubious by the inspired penman, whether he sacrificed her or no, was, that they who did afterwards offer their children, might not take any encouragement from this instance. Concerning this, and some other such passages in the sacred story, which learned men are in the dark, divided, and in doubt about, we need not much amuse ourselves; what is necessary to our salvation, thanks be to God, is plain enough.

C H A P. XII.

In this chapter we have, 1. Jephthah's encounter with the Ephraimites, and the blood shed on that unhappy occasion, ver. 1—6. And the conclusion of Jephthah's life and government, ver. 7. 2. A short account of three other of the judges of Israel, Ibzan, ver. 8—10. Elon, ver. 11, 12. Abdon, ver. 13—15.

1. **A**ND the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? We will burn thine house upon thee with fire. 2. And Jephthah said unto them, I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon; and when I called you, ye delivered me not out of their hands. 3. And when I saw that ye delivered me not, I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the LORD delivered them into my hand: Wherefore then are ye come up unto me this day to fight against me? 4. Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim, and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim, among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites. 5. And the Gileadites took the passages of

Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped, said, Let me go over: that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay: 6. Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand. 7. And Jephthah judged Israel six years: then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.

Here is, 1. The unreasonable displeasure of the men of Ephraim against Jephthah, because he had not called them in to his assistance against the Ammonites, that they might have shared in the triumphs and spoils, ver. 1. Pride was at the bottom of the quarrel, only by that comes contention. Proud men think all the honours lost that go beside themselves, and then who can stand before envy? The Ephraimites had the same quarrel with Gideon, chap. viii. 1. who was of Manasseh on their side Jordan, as Jephthah was of Manasseh on the other side Jordan. Ephraim and Manasseh were nearer a-kin than any other of the tribes, being both the sons of Joseph, and yet they were more jealous one of another than any other of the tribes. Jacob having crossed hands, and given Ephraim the preference, looking as far forward as the kingdom of the ten tribes, which Ephraim was the head of, after the revolt from the house of David; that tribe, not content with that honour in the promise, was displeased if Manasseh had any honour done it in the mean time. It is a pity that kindred and relation, which should be an inducement to love and peace, should be ever an occasion (as it often proves) of strife and discord. *A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and their contentions are as the bars of a castle*. The anger of the Ephraimites at Jephthah was, 1. Causeless and unjust. Why didst thou not call us to go with thee? For a good reason, because they were the men of Gilead that had made him their captain, not the men of Ephraim, so that he had no authority to call them. Had his attempt miscarried for want of their help, they might justly have blamed him for not desiring it. But when the work was done, and done effectually, the Ammonites subdued, and Israel delivered, there was no harm done, though their hands were not employed in it. 2. It was cruel and outrageous. They got together in a tumultuous manner, went over Jordan as far as Mizpeh in Gilead, where Jephthah lived, and no less will satisfy their fury, but they will burn his house and him in it. *Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce*. Those resentments that have the least reason for them, have commonly the most rage in them. Jephthah was now a conqueror over the common enemies of Israel, and they should have come to congratulate him, and return him the thanks of their tribe for the good services he had done, but we must not think it strange if we receive ill from those from whom we deserve well. Jephthah was now a mourner for the calamity of his family, upon his daughter's account, and they should have come to condole and comfort him; but barbarous men take a pleasure in adding affliction to the afflicted. In this world, the end of one trouble often proves the beginning of another; nor must we ever boast as though we had put off the harness.

2. Jephthah's warm vindication of him. He did not endeavour to pacify them, as Gideon had done in the like case; the Ephraimites were now more outrageous than they were then, and Jephthah had not so much of a meek and quiet spirit as Gideon had. Whether they would be pacified or no, Jephthah takes care.

1. To justify himself, ver. 2, 3. He makes it out that they had no cause at all to quarrel with him. (1.) It was not in pursuit of glory that he engaged in this war, but for the necessary defence of his country, with which the children of Ammon greatly strove. (2.) He had invited the Ephraimites to come and join with him, though he neither needed them, nor was under any obligation to pay that respect to them; but they had declined the service, *I called you, and ye delivered me not out of their hands*. Had that been true which they charged him with, yet it had not been a just ground of quarrel, but it seems it was false; and, as the matter of fact now appears, he had more cause to quarrel with them, for deserting the common interest of Israel in a time of need. It is no new thing for those who are themselves most culpable, to be the most clamorous in accusing the innocent. (3.) The enterprise was very hazardous, and they had more reason to pity him, than to be angry with him, *I put my life in my hands*, i. e. exposed myself to the utmost peril in what I did, having so small an army. The honour they envied was bought dear enough, they needed not grudge it him; few of them would have ventured so far for it. (4.) He doth not take the glory of the success to himself, that had been invidious, but gives it all to God, *the Lord delivered them into mine hand*. If God was pleased so far to make use of me for his glory, why should you be offended at that? Have you any reason to fight against me? Is not that in effect to fight against God, in whose hand I have been only an unworthy instrument?

2. When this just answer (though not so soft an answer as Gideon's) did not prevail to turn away their wrath, he took care both to defend himself from their fury, and to chastise their insolence with the sword, by virtue of his authority as Israel's judge. (1.) The Ephraimites had not only quarrelled with Jephthah, but when his neighbours and friends appeared to take his part, they had abused them, and given them foul language; for I adhere to our translation, and so take it, ver. 4. They said in scorn, Ye Gileadites that dwell here on the other side Jordan, are but fugitives of Ephraim, the scum and dregs of the tribes of Joseph, of which Ephraim is the chief, the refuse of the family, and are so accounted among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites. Who cares for you! All your neighbours know what you are, no better than fugitives and vagabonds, separated from your brethren, and driven hither into a corner. The Gileadites were as true Israelites as any other, and at this time had signalized themselves, both in the choice of Jephthah, and in the war with Ammon above all the families of Israel, and yet are most basely and unjustly called fugitives. It is an ill thing to fasten names or characters of reproach upon persons or countries, as is common, especially upon those that lie under outward disadvantages; it often occasions quarrels that prove of ill consequence, as it did here. See likewise what a mischievous thing an abusive tongue is, that calls ill names, and gives scurrilous language, *it sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell*, (James iii. 6.) and many a time cuts the throat of him that useth it, as it did here, *Psal. lxiiv. 8*. If these Ephraimites could have denied themselves the poor satisfaction of calling the Gileadites fugitives, they might have prevented a great deal of bloodshed, for grievous words stir up anger, and who knows how great a matter a little of that fire may kindle?

(2.) This affront raised the Gileadites blood, and the indignity done to themselves, as well as to their captain, must be revenged. 1. They routed them in the field, ver. 4. They fought with Ephraim, and being but a

rude unheaded rabble, smote Ephraim, and put them to flight. 2. They cut off their retreat, and so completed their revenge, *ver. 5, 6.* The Gileadites, who perhaps were better acquainted with the passages of Jordan than the Ephraimites were, secured them with strong guards, who were ordered to slay every Ephraimite that offered to pass the river. Here was, (1.) Cruelty enough in the destruction of them. Sufficient surely was the punishment that was inflicted by many, when they were routed in the field, there needed not this severity to cut off all that escaped. Shall the sword devour for ever? Whether Jephthah is to be praised for this, I know not, perhaps he saw it to be a piece of necessary justice. (2.) Cunning enough in the discovery of them. It seems the Ephraimites, though they spoke the same language with other Israelites, yet had got a custom in the dialect of their country to pronounce the Hebrew letter *Shin* like *Samech*, and they had so strangely used themselves to it, that they could not do otherwise, no not to save their lives. We learn to speak by imitation, they that first used *j* for *sh*, did it either because it was shorter, or because it was finer, and their children learned to speak like them; so that you might know an Ephraimite by it; as in England we know a west country man, or a north-country man, nay perhaps a Shropshire-man, and a Cheshire-man, by his pronunciation. *Thou art a Galilean, and thy speech betrays thee.* By this the Ephraimites were discovered. If they took a man that they suspected to be an Ephraimite, but he denied it, they bid him say Shibboleth, but either he could not, as our translation reads it, or he did not heed, or frame, or direct himself, as some read, to pronounce it right, but said Sibboleth, and so was known to be an Ephraimite, and was slain immediately. Shibboleth signifies a river or stream, ask leave to go over Shibboleth the river. Those that were thus cut off, made up the whole number of slaughtered Ephraimites forty-two thousand, (*ver. 6.*) Thus another mutiny of that angry tribe was prevented.

Now let us observe the righteousness of God in the punishment of these proud and passionate Ephraimites, which in several instances answered their sin. (1.) They were proud of the honour of their tribe, gloried in this, that they were Ephraimites, but how soon are they brought to be ashamed or afraid to own their country. *Art thou an Ephraimite?* No, now rather of any tribe than that. (2.) They had gone in a rage over Jordan to burn Jephthah's house with fire, but now they come back to Jordan as sneakingly, as they had passed it furiously, and were cut off from ever returning to their own houses. (3.) They had upbraided the Gileadites with the infelicity of their country, lying at such a distance, and now they suffer by an infirmity peculiar to their own country, in not being able to pronounce Shibboleth. (4.) They had called the Gileadites, unjustly, fugitives, and now they are really and in good earnest become fugitives themselves; and in the Hebrew, it is the same word, *ver. 5.* that is used of the Ephraimites that escaped, or that fled, which they had used in scorn of the Gileadites, calling them fugitives: he that rolleth the stone of reproach, unjustly upon another, let him expect that it will justly return upon himself.

Lastly, Here is the end of Jephthah's government. He judged Israel but six years, and then died, *ver. 7.* Perhaps the death of his daughter sunk him so, that he never looked up after, but it shortened his days, and he went to his grave mourning.

8. ¶ And after him Ibzan of Beth-lehem judged Israel. 9. And he had thirty sons, and thirty daughters, whom he sent abroad, and took in thirty daughters from abroad, for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years. 10. Then died Ibzan, and was buried at Beth-lehem. 11. ¶ And after him, Elon a Zebulonite judged Israel, and he judged Israel ten years. 12. And Elon the Zebulonite died, and was buried in Aijalon in the country of Zebulon. 13. ¶ And after him Abdon, the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite judged Israel. 14. And he had forty sons and thirty nephews, that rode on threescore and ten ass colts: and he judged Israel eight years. 15. And Abdon the son of Hillel, the Pirathonite died, and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mount of the Amalekites.

We have here a short account of the short reigns of three more of the judges of Israel; the first of which governed but seven years, the second ten, and the third eight. For the transgression of a land, many are the princes thereof, many in a short time, successively, *Prov. xxviii. 2.* Good men being removed in the beginning of their usefulness, and by that time they had applied themselves to their business.

1. Ibzan of Bethlehem, most probably Bethlehem of Judah, David's city, not that in Zebulon, which is only mentioned once, *Josh. xix. 15.* He ruled but seven years, but by the number of his children, and his disposing of them all in marriage himself, it appears that he lived long; and probably the great increase of his family, and the numerous alliances he made, added to his personal merits, made him the more fit to be either chosen by the people, as Jephthah was, or called of God immediately, as Gideon was, to be Israel's judge, to keep up and carry on the work of God among them. That which is remarkable concerning him, is his children. (1.) That he had many children, sixty in all, a quiver full of these arrows. Thus was Bethlehem of old famous for increase, the very city where he was to be born, whose spiritual seed should be as the stars of heaven. (2.) That he had an equal number of each sex, thirty sons and thirty daughters, a thing which doth not often happen in the same family, yet in the great family of mankind, he that at first made two, male and female, by his wife providence, preserves a succession of both in some sort of equality, as far as is requisite to the keeping up of the generations of men upon earth.

(3.) That he took care to marry them all; his daughters he sent abroad, & *maritis dedit*, so the vulgar Latin adds, *he provided husbands for them*; and as it were in exchange, and both ways strengthening his interest, he took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons. The Jews say, every father owes three things to his son, to teach him to read the law; learn him a trade; and get him a wife. What a difference was there between Ibzan's family and his immediate predecessor's Jephthah's! Ibzan has sixty children and all married, Jephthah but one, a daughter, that dies or lives unmarried. Some are increased, others are diminished, both are the Lord's doing.

2. Elon of Zebulon, in the north of Canaan, was next raised up to preside in public affairs, to administer justice, and reform abuses; ten years he continued a blessing to Israel, and then died, *ver. 11, 12.* Dr. Lightfoot computes, that in the beginning of his time, the forty years oppression by the Philistines began, spoken of *chap. xiii. 1.* and about that time Samson was born. Probably his residence being in the north, the Philistines who bordered upon the southern parts of Canaan, took the opportunity of making incursions upon them.

No. XXXVIII.

3. Abdon, of the tribe of Ephraim, succeeded, and in him that illustrious tribe begins to recover its reputation, having not afforded any person of note since Joshua; for Abimelech the Shechemite was rather a scandal to it. This Abdon was famous for the multitude of his off-spring, *ver. 14.* he had forty sons, and thirty grandsons, all which he lived to see grown up, and they rode on seventy ass-colts, either as judges and officers, or as gentlemen and persons of distinction. It was a satisfaction to him thus to see his children's children, but it was feared he did not see peace upon Israel, for by this time the Philistines had begun to break in upon them.

Concerning this, and the rest of these judges that have never so short an account given of them, yet notice is taken where they were buried, *ver. 7, 10, 12, 13.* perhaps, because the inscriptions upon their monuments (for such were anciently used, *2 Kings xxiii. 17.*) would serve for the confirmation and enlargement of their story, and might be consulted by such as desired further information concerning them. St. Peter having occasion to speak of David, saith, *his sepulchre is with us unto this day*, *Acts ii. 29.* Or it is intended for the honour of the places where they laid their bones; but may be improved for the lessening of our esteem of all worldly glory, which death and the grave will stain the pride of. These judges that were as gods to Israel, died like men, and all their honour was laid in the dust.

It is very strange, that in the history of all these judges, some of whose actions are very particularly related, there is not so much as once mention of the high priest, or any other priest or Levite, appearing either for counsel or action in any public affair, from Phinehas, *Judg. xx. 23.* to Eli; which may well be computed two hundred and fifty years, only the names of the high priests at that time are preserved, *1 Chron. vi. 4—7.* and *Ezra vii. 3, 4, 5.* How can this strange obscurity of that priesthood for so long a time, now in the beginning of its days, agree with that mighty splendor with which it was introduced, and the figure which the institution of it makes in the law of Moses? Surely it intimates, that the institution was chiefly intended to be typical, and that the mighty benefits that seemed to be promised by it were to be chiefly looked for in its antitype, the everlasting priesthood of our Lord Jesus, in comparison of the excelling glory of which that priesthood had no glory, *2 Cor. iii. 10.*

C H A P. XIII.

At this chapter begins the story of Samson, the last of the Judges of Israel, whose story is recorded in this book, and next before Eli. The passages related concerning him, are from first to last very surprising and uncommon. The figure he makes in this history is really great, and yet vastly different from that of his predecessors. We never find him at the head, either of a court or an army, never upon the throne of judgment, or in the field of battle, yet in his own proper person, a great patriot of his country, and a terrible scourge and check to its enemies and oppressors; he was an eminent believer, *Heb. xi. 32.* and a glorious type of him who with his own arm wrought salvation. The history of the rest of the judges commenceth from their advancement to that station, but Samson's begins with his birth, nay with his conception, and no less than an angel from heaven uphers him into the world, as a pattern of what should be afterwards done to John Baptist and Christ. This is related in this chapter. 1. The occasion of raising up this deliverer was the oppression of Israel by the Philistines, *ver. 2.* 2. His birth is foretold by an angel to his mother, *ver. 2—5.* 3. She relates it to his father, *ver. 6, 7.* 4. They both together have it again from the angel, *ver. 8—14.* whom they treat with respect, *ver. 15—18.* and who, to their great amazement, discovers what he was at parting, *ver. 19—23.* 5. Samson is born, *ver. 24, 25.*

1. AND the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years. 2. ¶ And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah, and his wife was barren and bare not. 3. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive and bear a son. 4. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine, nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing. 5. For lo, thou shalt conceive and bear a son, and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. 6. ¶ Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name. 7. But he said unto me, Behold thou shalt conceive and bear a son; and now drink no wine, nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God, from the womb to the day of his death.

The first verse gives us a short account, such as we have too often met with already, of the great distress that Israel was in, which gave occasion for the raising up of a deliverer. They did evil, as they had done, in the sight of the Lord, and then God delivered them, as he had done, into the hands of their enemies. If there had been no sin, there had needed no Saviour; but sin was suffered to abound, that grace might much more abound. The enemies God now sold them to were the Philistines, their next neighbours, that lay within them, the first and chief of the nations which were devoted to destruction, but which God left to prove them, *Judg. iii. 1—3.* The five lords of the Philistines, an inconsiderable people, in comparison with Israel, they had but five cities of any note, and yet when God made use of them as the staff in his hand, they were very oppressive and vexatious. And this trouble lasted longer than any yet; it continued forty years, though probably not always alike violent.

When Israel was in this distress, Samson was born; and here we have his birth foretold by an angel. Observe,

1. His extraction. He was of the tribe of Dan, *ver. 2.* Dan signifies a judge, or judgment, *Gen. xxx. 6.* and probably it was with an eye to Samson, that dying Jacob foretold, *Dan shall judge his people*, i. e. he shall produce a judge for his people, though one of the sons of the handmaids, as one, as well as any one, of the tribes of Israel, *Gen. xlix. 16.* The lot of the tribe of Dan lay next to the country of the Philistines, and therefore one of that tribe was most fit to be made a bridle upon them. His parents had been long childless. Many eminent persons were born of mothers that had been kept a great while in the want of the blessing of children; as Isaac, Joseph, Samson, and John Baptist, that the mercy might be the more acceptable when it did come. *Sing, O barren, that thou didst not bear,* *Isai. liv. 1.* Note, Mercies long waited for, often prove signal mercies, and it is made to appear that they were worth waiting for, and by them others may be encouraged to continue their hope in God's mercy.

2. The glad tidings brought to his mother, that she should have a son. The messenger was an *angel of the Lord*, *ver. 3.* yet appearing as a man, with the aspect and garb of a prophet, or man of God. And this angel (as the learned Bishop Patrick supposeth on *ver. 18.*) was the Lord himself, that is, the *Word of the Lord*, who was to be the Messiah, for his name is called Wonderful, *ver. 18.* and Jehovah, *ver. 19.* The great Redeemer did in a particular manner concern himself about this typical redeemer. It was not so much for the sake of Manoah and his wife, obscure Danites, that this extraordinary message was sent, but for Israel's sake; whose deliverer he was to be; and not only so, his services to Israel not seeming to answer the grandeur of his entry, but for the Messiah's sake, whose type he was to be, and whose birth must be foretold by an angel, as his was.

The angel in the message he delivers, (1.) Takes notice of her affliction, *Behold now thou art barren and bearest not.* From hence she might gather he was a prophet, that though a stranger to her, and one she had never seen before, yet he knew this to be her grievance. He tells her of it, not to upbraid her with it, but because perhaps at this time she was actually thinking of this affliction, and bemoaning herself as one written childless. God often sends in comfort to his people very seasonably, when they feel most from their troubles. Now thou art barren, but thou shalt not be always so, as she feared, nor long so. (2.) He assures her that she should conceive and bear a son, *ver. 3.* and repeats it, *ver. 5.* to shew the power of a divine word, the strongest man that ever was, was a child of promise, as Isaac, born by force and virtue of a promise, and faith in that promise, *Heb. xi. 11.* *Gal. iv. 23.* Many a woman, after having been long barren, has born a son by providence, but Samson was by promise, because a figure of the promised seed, so long expected by the faith of the Old Testament saints. (3.) He appoints that the child should be a Nazarite from his birth, and therefore that the mother should be subject to the law of the Nazarites, (though not under the vow of a Nazarite) and should *drink no wine nor strong drink*, so long as this child was to have his nourishment from her, either in the womb or at the breast, *ver. 4, 5.* Observe, This deliverer of Israel must be in the strictest manner devoted to God, and an example of holiness. It is spoken of as a kindness to the people, that God raised up of their young men for Nazarites, *Amos ii. 11.* Other judges had corrected their apostacies from God, but Samson must appear as one, more than any of them, consecrated to God; and notwithstanding what we read of his faults, we have reason to think, that being a Nazarite of God's making, he did, in the course of his conversation, exemplify, not only the ceremony, but the substance of that *separation to the Lord*, in which the Nazariteship did consist, *Numb. vi. 2.* Those that would save others, must by singular piety distinguish themselves. Samuel, who carried on Israel's deliverance from the Philistines, was a Nazarite by his mother's vow, *1 Sam. i. 11.* as Samson by the divine appointment. The mother of this deliverer must therefore deny herself, and not eat any unclean thing; what was lawful at another time was now to be forborn. As the promise tried her faith, so this precept tried her obedience, for God requires both from those on whom he will bestow his favours. Women with child ought conscientiously to avoid whatever they have reason to think will be any way prejudicial to the health or good constitution of the fruit of their body. And perhaps Samson's mother was to refrain from wine and strong drink, not only because he was designed for a Nazarite, but because he was designed for a man of great strength, which his mother's temperance would contribute to. (4.) He foretells the service which this child should do to his country, *he shall begin to deliver Israel.* Note, It is very desirable that our children may be not only devoted entirely to God themselves, but instrumental for the good of others, and the service of their generation. Not recluses, candles under a bushel, but on a candlestick. Observe, *He shall begin to deliver Israel.* This intimates, that the oppression of the Philistines should last long, for Israel's deliverance from it should not so much as begin, nor one step be taken towards it, till this child, which was now unborn, should be grown up to a capacity of beginning it. And yet he must not complete the deliverance neither; he shall only begin to deliver Israel, which intimates that the trouble should still be prolonged; God chooseth to carry on his work gradually, and by several hands. One lays the foundation of a good work, another builds, and perhaps a third brings forth the top-stone.

Now herein Samson was a type of Christ. (1.) As a Nazarite to God, a Nazarite from the womb. For though our Lord Jesus was not a Nazarite himself, yet he was typified by the Nazarites, as being perfectly pure from all sin, not so much as conceived in it, and entirely devoted to his father's honour. Of the Jewish Church, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, because to them pertained the promise of him, *Rom. ix. 4, 5.* By virtue of that promise he long lay, as it were, in the womb of that Church, which for many ages was pregnant of him; and therefore, like Samson's mother, during that pregnancy, was made a holy nation and a peculiar people, and strictly forbidden to touch any unclean thing for his sake, who in the fulness of time was to come from them. (2.) As a deliverer of Israel; for he is Jesus a Saviour, who saves his people from their sins. But with this difference: Samson did only begin to deliver Israel, David as afterwards raised up to complete the destruction of the Philistines. But our Lord Jesus is both Samson and David too; both the *author and finisher of our faith.*

3. The report which Manoah's wife in a transport of joy brings in all haste to her husband, of this surprising message, *ver. 6, 7.* The glad tidings were brought her when she was alone, perhaps religiously employed in meditation and prayer; but she could not, she would not, conceal it from her husband, but gives him an account,

1. Of the messenger. It was a man of God, *ver. 6.* His countenance she could describe, it was very awful, he had such a majesty in his looks, such a sparkling eye, such a shining face, so powerfully commanding reverence and respect, that according to the idea she had of an angel, he had the very countenance of one. But his name she can give no account of, nor to what tribe or city of Israel he belonged, for he did not think fit to tell her, and for her part the very sight of him struck such an awe upon her, that she durst not ask him. She was abundantly satisfied, that he was a servant of God, his person and message she thought carried their own evidence along with them, and she enquired no further.

2. Of the message. She gives him a particular account both of the pro-

mise, and of the precept, *ver. 7.* that he also might believe the promise, and might on all occasions be a monitor to her to observe the precept. Thus should yoke-fellows communicate to each other their experiences of communion with God, and their improvements in acquaintance with him, that they might be helpful to each other in the way that is called holy.

8. ¶ Then Manoah intreated the LORD, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send, come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born. 9. And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her. 10. And the woman made haste, and ran, and shewed her husband, and said unto him, Behold the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day. 11. And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am. 12. And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass: How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him? 13. And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman, let her beware. 14. She may not eat of any thing that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I commanded her, let her observe.

We have here an account of a second visit, which the angel of God made to Manoah and his wife.

1. Manoah earnestly prayed for it, *ver. 8.* He was not incredulous of the story his wife told him; he knew she was a virtuous woman, and therefore the heart of her husband doth justly trust in her; he knew she would not go about to impose upon him, much less was he, as Josephus unworthily represents him, jealous of his wife's conversation with this stranger; but, (1.) He takes it for granted, that this child of promise should in due time be given them: and speaks without hesitation of the child that shall be born. There was not found so great faith, no not in Zechariah, a priest, then in waiting at the altar of the Lord, and to whom the angel himself appeared, as was in this honest Danite. Things hid from the wife and prudent that value themselves upon the niceness of their enquiries, are often revealed unto babes, who know how to prize God's gifts, and to take God's word. *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet, as Manoah here, have believed.* (2.) All his care is, *What they should do to the child that should be born.* Note, Good men are more solicitous and desirous to know the duty that is to be done by them, than to know the events that shall be concerning them; for duty is ours, events are God's. Solomon enquires concerning what the good men should do, not the good they should have, *Ecc. ii. 3.* (3.) He therefore prays to God to send the same blessed messenger again to give them further instructions concerning the management of this Nazarite, fearing lest his wife's joy for the promise might have made her forget some part of the precept, in which he was desirous to be fully informed, and lie under no mistake. *Lord, let the man of God come again unto us,* for we desire to be better acquainted with him. Note, Those that have heard from heaven, cannot but wish to hear more from thence, again and again to meet with the man of God. Observe, he doth not go, or send his servants abroad to find out this man of God, but seeks him upon his knees, prays to God to send him, and thus seeking finds him. Would we have God's messengers, the ministers of his gospel, to bring a word proper for us, and for our instruction, *intreat the Lord* to send them to us to teach us, *Rom. xv. 30—32.*

2. God graciously granted it, *ver. 9.* God hearkened to the voice of Manoah. Note, God will not fail some way or other to guide those by his counsel, that are sincerely desirous to know their duty, and apply themselves to him to teach them, *Psal. xxv. 8, 9.*

1. The angel appears the second time also to the wife, when she was sitting alone, probably tending the flocks, or otherwise well employed in the field where she was retired; solitude is often a good opportunity of communion with God; good people have thought themselves never less alone than when alone, if God be with them.

2. She goes in all haste to call her husband, doubtless humbly beseeching the stay of this blessed messenger, till she returns, and her husband with her, *ver. 10, 11.* She did not desire him to go with her to her husband, but will fetch her husband to him. Those that would meet with God must attend there where he is pleased to manifest himself. Oh, faith she, overjoyed, my dear love, thy prayers are answered, yonder is the man of God come to make us another visit. He that came the other day; or, as some read it, this day, for *other* is not in the original, and it is probable enough that both these visits were the same day, and at the same place, and that the second time she sat expecting him. The man of God is very willing she should call her husband, *John iv. 16.* Those that have got acquaintance with the things of God themselves, should invite others to the same acquaintance, *John i. 45, 46.* Manoah is not disguised that the angel did not this second time appear to him, but very willingly goes after his wife to the man of God. To atone (as it were) for the first fatal miscarriage, when Eve earnestly pressed Adam to that which was evil, and he too easily yielded to her; let yoke-fellows excite one another to love and good works; and if the wife will lead, let not the husband think it any disparagement to him, to follow her in that which is virtuous and praise-worthy.

3. Manoah being come to the angel, and satisfied by him that he was the same that had appeared to his wife, doth, with all humility, 1. Welcome the promise, *ver. 12.* Now let thy words come to pass, this was not only the language of his desire, but of his faith, like that of the blessed Virgin, *Luke i. 38.* Be it according to thy word. Lord, I lay hold on what thou hast said, and depend upon it, let it come to pass. 2. Beg that the prescriptions given might be repeated, *How shall we order the child?* The directions were given to his wife, but he looks upon himself as concerned to assist her in the careful management of this promised seed, according to order, for the utmost care of both the parents, and their constant joint endeavouring, is little enough to be engaged for the good ordering of children that are devoted to God, and to be brought up for him. Let not one devolve it on the other, but both do their best. Observe from Manoah's enquiry, 1. In general, that when God is pleased to bestow any mercy upon us, our great care must be how to use it well, and as we ought, because it is then only a mercy indeed, when it is rightly managed. God has

has given us bodies, souls, estates, how shall we order them, that we may answer the intent of the donor, and give a good account of them! 2. In particular, those to whom God hath given children, must be very careful how they order them, and what they do unto them, that they may drive out the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts, form their minds and manners well betimes, and train them in the way wherein they should go. Herein pious parents will beg divine assistance. Lord, teach us how we may order our children, that we may be Nazarites, and living sacrifices to thee.

4. The angel repeats the directions he had before given, *ver.* 13, 14. *Of all that I forbid let her beware. And all that I commanded her let her observe.* Note, There is need of a great deal both of caution and observation, for the right ordering both of ourselves and of our children. Beware and observe; take heed not only of drinking wine or strong drink, but of eating any thing that cometh of the vine. Those that would preserve themselves pure, must keep at a distance from that which borders upon sin, or leads to it. When he was with child of a Nazarite, he must not eat any unclean thing; so those, in whom Christ is formed, must carefully cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and do nothing to the prejudice of the new man.

15. ¶ And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee. 16. And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt offer a burnt-offering, thou must offer it unto the LORD: for Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the LORD. 17. And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass, we may do thee honour? 18. And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret? 19. So Manoah took a kid, with a meat-offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the LORD: and the angel did wonderfully, and Manoah and his wife looked on. 20. For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar: and Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground. 21. (But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife.) Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the LORD. 22. And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. 23. But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering, and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.

We have here an account,

1. Of what farther passed between Manoah and the angel at this interview. It was in kindness to him that while the angel was with him, it was concealed from him that it was an angel, for had he known it, it would have been such a terror to him, that he durst not have conversed with him as he did, *ver.* 16. *He knew not that he was an angel.* So Christ was in the world, and the world knew him not. *Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself.* We could not bear the sight of the divine glory unveiled. God having determined to speak to us by men like ourselves, prophets and ministers, even when he spake by his angels, or by his Son, they appeared in the likeness of men, and were taken but for men of God.

Now, 1. The angel declined to accept his treat, and appointed him to turn it into a sacrifice. Manoah being desirous to shew some token of respect and gratitude to this venerable stranger, who had brought them these glad tidings, begged he would take a short supper with him, *ver.* 15. *we will soon make ready a kid for thee.* They that welcome the message, will be kind to the messengers for his sake that sends them, 1 *Thess.* v. 13. But the angel told him, *ver.* 16. *he would not eat of his bread,* no more than he would of Gideon's, but as there directed him to offer it to God, *chap.* vi. 20, 21. Angels need not meat or drink, but the glorifying of God is their meat and drink, and it was Christ's, *John* iv. 34. And we in some measure do the will of God as they do it, if though we cannot live without meat and drink, yet we eat and drink to the glory of God, and so turn even our common meals into sacrifices.

2. The angel declined telling him his name, and would not so far gratify his curiosity. Manoah desired to know his name, *ver.* 17. and of what tribe he was, not as if he doubted the truth of his message, but that they might return his visit, and be better acquainted with him. It is good to increase and improve our acquaintance with good men and good ministers: and he has a further design, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour, celebrate thee as a true prophet, and recommend others to thee for divine instructions; that we may call the child that shall be born after thy name, and so do thee honour; or that we may send thee a present, honouring one whom God has honoured. But the angel denies his request with something of a check to his curiosity, *ver.* 18. *why askest thou thus after my name?* Jacob himself could not prevail for this favour, *Gen.* xxxii. 29. Note, We have not what we ask, when we ask we know not what. Manoah's request was honestly meant, and yet was denied. God told Moses his name, *Exod.* iii. 13, 14. because there was a particular occasion for his knowing it, but here there was no occasion. What Manoah asked for instruction in his duty he was readily told, *ver.* 12, 13. but what he asked to gratify his curiosity was denied. God has in his word given us full directions concerning our duty, but designed not to answer all the enquiries of a speculative head. He gives him a reason for his refusal, it is secret. The names of angels were not as yet revealed, to prevent the idolizing of them; after the captivity, when the church was cured of idolatry, angels made themselves known to Daniel by their names, Michael and Gabriel; and to Zacharias, the angel told his name unasked, *Luke* i. 19. *I am Gabriel.* But here it is secret, or it is wonderful, too wonderful for us. One of Christ's names is *Wonderful*, *Isai.* ix. 6. His name was long a secret, but by the gospel it is brought to light, *Jesus a Saviour.* Manoah must not ask, because he must not know. Note, There are secret things which belong not to us, and which we must content ourselves to be in the

dark about, while we are here in this world. (2.) We must therefore never indulge a vain curiosity in our enquiries concerning these things, *Col.* ii. 18. *Nescire velle quæ magister maximus docere non vult, crudita inscitia est.*

3. The angel assisted, and owned their sacrifice, and at parting gave them to understand who he was. He had directed them to offer their burnt-offering to the Lord, *ver.* 16. Praises offered up to God are the most acceptable entertainment of the angels; see *Rev.* xxii. 9. *worship God.* And Manoah, having so good a warrant, though he was no priest, and had no altar, turned his meat into a meat-offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the Lord, (*ver.* 19.) *i. e.* he brought and laid it to be offered, Lord, here it is, do what thou pleasest with it. Thus must we bring our hearts to God as living sacrifices, and submit them to the operation of his Spirit. All things being now ready, 1. *The angel did wonderfully,* for his name was *Wonderful*. Probably, the wonder he did was the same with what he had done for Gideon; he made fire to come either down from heaven, or up out of the rock to consume the sacrifice. 2. He ascended up towards heaven in the flame of the sacrifice, *ver.* 20. By this it appeared, that he was not, as they thought, a mere man, but a messenger immediately from heaven, thence certainly he descended, for thither he ascended, *John* iii. 13.—vi. 62. This signified God's acceptance of the offering, and intimates to what we owe the acceptance of all our offerings, even to the mediation of the angel of the covenant, that other angel who puts much incense to the prayers of saints, and so offers them before the throne, *Rev.* viii. 3. Prayer is the ascent of the soul to God. But it is Christ in the heart by faith that makes it an offering of a sweet-smelling favour: without him our services are offensive smoke, but in him acceptable flame. We may apply it to Christ's sacrifice of himself for us; he ascended in the flame of his own offering, for by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, *Heb.* ix. 12. While the angel did this, it is twice said, *ver.* 19, and 20. *that Manoah and his wife looked on.* This is a proof of the miracle, the matter of fact was true, for out of the mouth of these two eye-witnesses the report of it is established. The angel did all that was done in the sacrifice, they did but look on; yet doubtless when the angel ascended towards heaven, their hearts ascended with him in thanksgiving for the promise which came from thence, and in expectation of the performance to come from thence too. Yet when the angel is ascended, they dare not as those that were the witnesses of Christ's ascension, stand gazing up into heaven, but in holy fear and reverence they fell on their faces to the ground. And now, (1.) They knew that it was an angel, *ver.* 21. It was plain it was not the body of a man they saw, since it was not chained to the earth, nor prejudiced by fire; but ascended, and ascended in flame; and therefore with good reason conclude it was an angel, for he maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. (2.) But he did not any more appear to them; it was for a particular occasion, now over, that he was sent, not to settle a constant correspondence, as with prophets. They must remember and observe what the angel had said, and not expect to hear more.

2. We have an account of the impressions which this vision made upon Manoah and his wife. While the angel did wonderfully they looked on, and said nothing. So it becomes us carefully to observe the wonderful works of God, and to be silent before him; but when he was gone, having finished his work, had time to make their reflections.

1. In Manoah's reflection upon it, there is great fear, *ver.* 22. He had spoken with great assurance of the son they should shortly be the joyful parents of, *ver.* 8—12. and yet is now put into such a confusion by that very thing, which should have strengthened and encouraged his faith, that he counts upon nothing but their being both cut off immediately, *we shall surely die.* It was a vulgar opinion generally received among the ancient Jews, that it was present death to see God, or an angel; and this notion quite overcame his faith for the present, as it did Gideon's, *chap.* vi. 22.

2. In his wife's reflections upon it there is great faith, *ver.* 23. Here the weaker vessel was the stronger believer, which perhaps was the reason why the angel chose once and again to appear to her. Manoah's heart began to fail him, but his wife, as a help-meet for him, encouraged him. Two are better than one, for if one fall into dejections and despondencies, the other will help to raise him up. Yoke-fellows should piously assist each other's faith and joy, as there is occasion. None could argue better than Manoah's wife doth here: *we shall surely die,* faith her husband; nay, faith she, we need not fear that, let us never turn that against us, which is really for us. We shall not die unless God be pleased to kill us; our death must come from his hand, and his pleasure; now the tokens of his favour which we have received, forbid us to think that he designs our destruction. Had he thought fit to kill us, (1.) He would not have accepted our sacrifice, and signified to us his acceptance of it by turning it to ashes, *Psal.* xx. 3. *marg.* The sacrifice was the ransom of our lives, and the fire fastening upon that, was a plain indication of the turning away his wrath from us. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, but you see ours is not so. (2.) He would not have shewed us all these things, these strange sights, now at a time when there is little or no open vision, 1 *Sam.* iii. 1. nor would he have given these exceeding great and precious promises of a son, that shall be a Nazarite and a deliverer of Israel; he would not have told us such things as these, if he had been pleased to kill us. We need not fear the withering of those roots, out of which such a branch is yet to spring. Note, Hereby it appears God designs not the death of sinners, that he has accepted the great sacrifice which Christ offered up for their salvation, and has put them in a way of obtaining his favour, and assured them of it upon their repentance. Had he been pleased to kill them, he would not have done so. And let those good Christians, who have had communion with God in the word and prayer, to whom he has graciously manifested himself, and who have had reason to think God has accepted their works, take encouragement from thence in a cloudy and dark day; God would not have done what he has done for my soul, if he had designed to forsake me, and leave me to perish at last, for his work is perfect; nor will he mock his people with his favours. Learn to reason as Manoah's wife did, if God had designed me to perish under his wrath, he would not have given me such distinguishing tokens of his favour. *O woman, great is thy faith.*

24. ¶ And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him. 25. And the spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Here is, 1. Samson's birth. The woman that had been long barren bare a son, according to the promise, for no word of God shall fall to the ground. Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good! His name Samson comes from Shemesh, the sun, turned into a diminutive, *sul exiguus*, the sun in miniature; perhaps because being born like Moses, to be a deliverer, he was, like him, exceeding fair, his face shone like a little sun: or in remembrance

membrance of the shining countenances of that man of God, who brought them the notice of him; though they knew not his name, yet thus now his sayings were come to pass, they did him honour. A little sun, because a Nazarite born, and the Nazarites were as rubies and sapphires, Lam. iv. 7. And because of his great strength; the sun is compared to a strong man, Psal. xix. 5. why should not a strong man then be compared to the sun when he goes forth in his strength. A little sun, because the glory of, and a light to, his people Israel. A type of Christ the sun of righteousness.

3. His childhood. He grew more than ordinary in strength and stature, far out-grew other children of his age, and not in that only, but in other instances, it appeared that the Lord blessed him, qualified him both in body and mind, for something great and extraordinary. Children of promise shall have the blessing.

3. His youth. When he grew up a little, *the Spirit of the Lord began to move him*, ver. 25. This was an evidence that the Lord blessed him: Where God gives his blessing, he gives his Spirit to qualify for the blessing. Those are blessed indeed, in whom the Spirit of grace begins to work betimes, in the days of their childhood. If the Spirit be poured out upon our offspring, they will spring up as willows by the water-courses, Isai. xlv. 3, 4. The Spirit of God moves Samson in the camp of Dan, i. e. in the general muster of the trained-bands of that tribe, who probably had formed a camp between Zorah and Eshtaol, near the place he lived, to oppose the incursions of the Philistines, there Samson, when a child, appeared among them, and signalized himself by some very brave actions excelling them all in manly exercises and trials of strength: and probably he shewed himself more than ordinarily zealous against the enemies of his country, and discovered more of a public spirit than could be expected in a child. The Spirit moved him at times, not at all times. but as the wind blows, when he listeth, to shew that what he did was not from himself, then he could have done it at any time. Strong men think themselves greatly animated by wine, Psal. lxxviii. 65. But Samson drank no wine, and yet excelled in strength and courage, and every thing that was bold and brave, for he had the Spirit of God moving him; therefore *he not drunk with wine, but he filled with the Spirit*, who will come to those that are sober and temperate.

C H A P. XIV.

The idea which this chapter gives us of Samson is not what one might have expected concerning one, who, by the special designation of heaven, was a Nazarite to God, and a deliverer of Israel, and yet really he was both. Here is, 1. Samson's courtship of a daughter of the Philistines, and his marriage to her, ver. 1—5, 7, 8. 2. His conquest of a lion, and the prize he found in the carcase of it, ver. 5, 6, 8, 9. 3. Samson's riddle proposed to his companions, ver. 10—14, and unriddled by the treachery of his wife, ver. 15—18. 4. The occasion this gave him to kill thirty of the Philistines, ver. 19. and to break off his new alliance, ver. 20.

1. **A**ND Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. 2. And he came up and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath, of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife. 3. Then his father and his mother said unto him, *Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?* And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me, for she pleaseth me well. 4. But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel. 5. Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and behold, a young lion roared against him. 6. And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done. 7. And he went down and talked with the woman, and she pleased Samson well. 8. ¶ And after a time, he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion, and behold, there was a swarm of bees, and honey in the carcase of the lion. 9. And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion.

Here, 1. Samson, under the extraordinary conduct of providence, seeks an occasion of quarrelling with the Philistines, by joining in affinity with them. A strange method, but the truth is, Samson was himself a riddle, a paradox of a man, did that which was really great and good, by that which was seemingly weak and evil, because he was designed not to be a pattern to us, who must walk by rule, not by example, but a type of him, who though he knew no sin was made sin for us, and appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh, that he might condemn and destroy sin in the flesh, Rom. viii. 3.

1. As the negotiation of Samson's marriage was a common case, we may observe, (1.) That it was weakly and foolishly done of him to set his affections upon a daughter of the Philistines, the thing appeared very ill. Shall one, that is not only an Israelite, but a Nazarite, devoted to the Lord, covet to become one with a worshipper of Dagon? Shall one, marked for a patriot of his country, match among those that were its sworn enemies? He saw this woman, ver. 1. and she pleased him well, ver. 3. It doth not appear, he had any reason to think her either wife or virtuous, or any way likely to be a help-meet for him, but something he saw in her face that was very agreeable to his fancy, and therefore nothing will serve, but she must be his wife. He that in the choice of a wife is guided only by his eye, and governed by his fancy, must afterwards thank himself, if he find a Philistine in his arms. (2.) Yet it was wisely and well done, not to proceed so much as to make his addresses to her till he had first made his parents acquainted

with the matter. He told them, and desired them to get her for him to wife, ver. 2. Herein he was an example to all children, conformable to the law of the fifth commandment. Children ought not to marry, nor to move towards it, without the advice and consent of their parents; they that do (as Bishop Hall here expresseth it) *wilfully unchild themselves, and exchange natural affection for violent*. Parents have a property in their children as parts of themselves. In marriage this property is transferred, for such is the law of the relation, that a man shall leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife; it is therefore not only unkind and ungrateful, but very unjust to alienate this property without their concurrence; who so thus robbeth his father or mother, stealing himself from them, who is nearer and dearer to them than their goods, and yet stith, *It is no transgression, the same is the companion of a destroyer*, Prov. xxviii. 24. (3.) His parents did well to dissuade him from yoking himself thus unequally with unbelievers. Let those who profess religion, but are courting affinity with the profane and irreligious, and matching into families where they have reason to think the fear of God is not, nor the worship of God, let them hear their reasoning, and apply it to themselves. *Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or if none of our own tribe, never a one among all my people, never an Israelite that pleaseth thee, or that thou canst think worthy of thine affection, that thou shouldst marry a Philistine?* In the old world the sons of God corrupted and ruined themselves and their families, and that truly primitive Church, by marrying with the daughters of men, Gen. vi. 2. God had forbidden the people of Israel to marry with the devoted nations, one of which the Philistines were, Deut. vii. 3. (4.) If there had not been a special reason for it, it had certainly been ill in him to insist upon his choice, and in them to agree to it at last: Yet their tender compliance with his affections, may be observed as an example to parents, not to be unreasonable in crossing their children's choices, not to deny their consent, especially as to those that have seasonably and dutifully asked it, without some very good cause. As children must obey their parents in the Lord, so parents must not provoke their children to wrath, lest they be discouraged. This Nazarene, in his subjection to his parents, asked their consent, and not proceeding till he had it; was not only an example to all children, but a type of the holy child Jesus, who went down with his parents to Nazareth (thence called a Nazarene) and was subject to them, Luke ii. 51.

2. But this treaty of marriage is expressly said to be of the Lord, ver. 4. Not only that God afterwards over-ruled it to serve his designs against the Philistines, but that he puts it into Samson's heart to make this choice, that he might have occasion against the Philistines. It was not a thing evil in itself for him to marry a Philistine. It was forbidden, because of the danger of receiving hurt by idolaters; where there was not that danger, but an opportunity hoped for doing that hurt to them, which would be good service to Israel, the law might well be dispensed with. It was said, chap. xiii. 25. that the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times, and we have reason to think, he himself perceived that Spirit to move him at this time, when he made this choice; and that otherwise he would have yielded to his parents dissuaves, nor would they have consented at last, if he had not satisfied them it was of the Lord. This would bring him into acquaintance and converse with him, by which he might have such opportunities of galling them, as otherwise he could not have. It should seem, the way in which the Philistines oppressed Israel, was not by great armies, but by the clandestine incursions of their giants, and small parties of their rapparees, in the same way therefore Samson must deal with them; let him but by this marriage get among them, and he would be a thorn in their sides. Jesus Christ being to deliver us from this present evil world, and to cast out the prince of it, did himself visit it, though full of pollution and enmity, and by assuming a body, did in some sense join in affinity with it, that he might destroy our spiritual enemies, and his own arm might work the salvation.

2. Samson by a special providence is animated and encouraged to attack the Philistines. That being the service for which he was designed, God when he called him to it, prepared him for it by two occurrences.

1. By enabling him in one journey to Timnath, to kill a lion, ver. 5, 6. Many decline doing the service they might do, because they know not their own strength. God let Samson know what he could do in the strength of the Spirit of the Lord, that he might never be afraid to look the greatest difficulties in the face. David that was to complete the destruction of the Philistines, must try his hand first upon a lion and a bear, that from thence he might infer, as we might suppose Samson did, that the uncircumcised Philistine should be as one of them, 1 Sam. xvii. 36. (1.) Samson's encounter with the lion was hazardous. It was a young lion, one of the fiercest sort that set upon him, roaring for his prey, and particularly set his eye upon him, he roared in meeting him, so the word is. He was all alone, in the vineyards, whither he had rambled from his father and mother, who kept the high road, probably to eat grapes. Children consider not how they expose themselves to the roaring lion that seeks to devour, when out of a foolish fondness for liberty, they wander from under the eye and wing of their prudent pious parents. Nor do young people consider what lions lurk in the vineyards, the vineyards of red wines, as dangerous as snakes under the green grass. Had Samson met with this lion in the way, he might have had more reason to expect help both from God and man, than here in the solitary vineyards, out of his road. But there was a special providence in it, and the more hazardous the encounter was, (2.) The victory was so much the more illustrious. It was obtained without any difficulty, he strangled the lion, and tore out his throat with as much ease as he would have strangled a kid, yet without any instrument, not only no sword or bow, but not so much as a staff or a knife, he had nothing in his hand. Christ engaged the roaring lion, and conquered him in the beginning of his public work, Mat. iv. 1, &c. and afterwards spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them in himself, as some read it, not by any instrument. He was exalted in his own strength. That which added much to the glory of Samson's triumph over the lion was, that when he had done this great exploit, he did not boast of it, did not so much as tell his father or mother, that which many a one would soon have made the country ring of. Modesty and humility make up the brightest crown of great performances.

2. By providing him the next journey with honey in the carcase of this lion, ver. 8, 9. When he came down the next time to solemnize his nuptials, and his parents with him, he had the curiosity to turn aside into the vineyard where he had killed the lion, perhaps that with the sight of the place he might affect himself with the mercy of that great deliverance, and might there solemnly give thanks to God for it. It is good thus to mind ourselves of God's former favours to us. There he found the carcase of the lion, the birds or beasts of prey, it is likely, had eaten the flesh, and in the skeleton a swarm of bees had knit and made a hive of it, and had not been idle, but had there laid up a good stock of honey, which was one of the staple commodities of Canaan, such plenty there was of it, that it is said to flow with milk and honey. Samson having a better title than any man to the hive, seized the honey with his hands. This supposeth an encounter with the bees; but he that dreaded not the lion's paws, had no reason to fear their stings. As by this victory over the lion he was emboldened to encounter the Philistine giants, if there should be occasion, notwithstanding their strength and fierceness, so by dispossessing the bees he was taught not to fear the multi-

tude of the Philistines, though they *compassed him about like bees*; yet in the name of the Lord he shall destroy them, Psal. cxviii. 12. Of the honey he here found, 1. He eat himself, asking no questions for conscience sake; for the dead bones of any unclean beast had not that ceremonial pollution in them that the bones of a man had. John Baptist, that Nazarite of the New Testament, lived upon wild honey. 2. He gave to his parents, and they did eat. Did not eat all himself; *Thou hast found honey, eat so much as is sufficient for thee*, and no more, Prov. xxv. 16. He let his parents share with him. Children should be grateful to their parents with the fruits of their own industry, and so *show pity at home*, 1 Tim. v. 4. Let those that by the grace of God have found sweetness in religion themselves, communicate their experiences to their friends and relations, and invite them to come and share with them. He told not his parents whence he had it, lest they should have scrupled eating it. Bishop Hall observes here, that *those are less wise and more scrupulous than Samson that decline the use of God's gifts, because they find them in ill vessels*. Honey is honey still, though in a dead lion. Our Lord Jesus having conquered Satan that roaring lion, believers find honey in the carcase, abundant strength and satisfaction, enough for themselves, and for all their friends, from that victory.

10. ¶ So his father went down unto the woman, and Samson made there a feast: for so used the young men to do. 11. And it came to pass when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him. 12. ¶ And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: If ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets, and thirty change of garments. 13. But if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets, and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth the riddle that we may hear it. 14. And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle. 15. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to take that we have! is it not so? 16. And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shalt I tell it thee? 17. And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she lay fore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people. 18. And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day, before the sun went down, What is sweeter than honey, and what is stronger than a lion? And he said unto them, If ye had not ploughed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle. 19. ¶ And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he went down to Askelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle: and his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house. 20. But Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend.

We have here an account of Samson's wedding-feast, and the occasion it gave him to fall upon the Philistines.

1. Samson conformed to the custom of the country, in making a festival on his nuptial solemnities, which continued seven days, ver. 10. Though he was a Nazarite, he did not affect in any thing of his nature to be singular, but did as the young men used to do upon such occasions. It is no part of religion to go contrary to the innocent usages of the places where we live; nay, it is a reproach to religion when those who profess it, give just occasion to others to call them covetous, sneaking, and morose. A good man should strive to make himself in the best sense a good companion.

2. His wife's relations paid him the accustomed respect of the place upon that occasion, and brought him thirty young men to keep him company during the solemnity, and to attend him as his grooms-men, ver. 11. when they saw him, what a comely man he was, and what an ingenious graceful look he had, they brought him these to do him honour, and to improve by his conversation, while he stayed among them. Or rather, when they saw him, what a strong stout man he was, they brought these seemingly to be his companions, but really to be a guard upon him, or spies to observe him. Jealous enough they were of him, but would have been more so, had they known of his victory over the lion, which therefore he had industriously concealed. The favours of Philistines have oft some mischief or other designed in them.

3. Samson, to entertain the company, propounds a riddle to them, and lays a wager with them they cannot find it out in seven days, ver. 12, 13, 14. The usage, it seems, was very ancient upon such occasions, when friends were together to be innocently merry, not to spend all the time in dull eating and drinking, as Bishop Patrick expresseth it, or in the other gratifications of sense, as music, dancing, or shows, but to propose questions, by which their learning and ingenuity might be tried and improved. This becomes men, wise men, that value themselves by their reason; but very unlike to it are the infamous and worse than brutish entertainments of this degenerate age, which sends nothing round but the glass and the health, till reason is drowned, and wisdom sunk. Now, (1.) Samson's riddle was his own invention, for it was his own achievement that gave occasion for it; *Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness*. Read my riddle, what is this? Beasts of prey do not yield meat for man, yet food came from the devourer, and those creatures that are strong when they are alive, commonly smell strong, and are every way offensive when they are dead, as horses, and yet out of the strong, or out of the bitter, so the

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Syriac and Arabic read it, *came sweetness*. If they have but so much sense as to consider what eater is most strong, and what meat is most sweet, they have found out the riddle, and neither lions nor honey were such strangers to their country, that the thoughts of them needed to be out of the way; and the solving of the riddle would have given him occasion to tell them the entertaining story on which it was founded. This riddle is applicable to many of the methods of divine providence and grace: When God by any over-ruling providence brings good out of evil to his Church and people, when that which threatened their ruin turns to their advantage, when their enemies are made serviceable to them, and the wrath of men turns to God's praise, then comes meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong. See Phil. i. 12.

(2.) His wager was more considerable to him than to them, because he was one against thirty partners. It was not a wager laid upon God's providence, or upon the chance of a die or a card, but upon their ingenuity, and amounted to no more than an honorary recompence of wit, and a disgrace upon blockishness.

4. His companions, when they could not expound the riddle themselves, obliged his wife to get from him the explication of it, ver. 15. Whether they were really of a dull capacity, or whether under a particular insatiation at this time, it was strange that none of thirty could in all this time stumble upon so plain a thing as that, *what is sweeter than honey, and what stronger than a lion*? It should seem, that in wit, as well as manners, they were barbarous; barbarous indeed, to threaten the bride, that if she would not use means with the bridegroom to let them into the meaning of it, they would burn her and her father's house with fire. Could any thing be more brutish? It was base enough to turn a jest into earnest, and they were unworthy of conversation, that would grow so outrageous rather than confess their ignorance, and lose so small a wager, nor would it save their credit at all, to tell the riddle when they were told it. It was yet more villainous to engage Samson's wife to be a traitor to her own husband, and to pretend a greater interest in her than he had: Now she was married, she must forget her own people. Yet most inhuman of all was it to threaten, if she could not prevail, to burn her and all her relations with fire, and all for fear of losing each of them the value of a shirt and a coat, *have ye called us to take what we have*? Those must never lay wagers that cannot lose more tamely and easily than thus.

5. His wife by unreasonable importunity obtains from him a key to his riddle. It was on the seventh day, i. e. the seventh day of the week (as Dr. Lightfoot conjectures) but the fourth day of the feast, that they solicited her to entice her husband, ver. 15. and she did, (1.) What great art and management, ver. 16. resolving not to believe he loved her, unless he would gratify her in this thing. She knew he could not bear to have his love questioned, and therefore if any thing would work upon him, that would, *Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not*, if thou deniest me; whereas he had much more reason to say, *thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not*, if thou insist upon it. And that she might not make this the test of his affection, he assures her he had not told his own parents, notwithstanding the confidence he reposed in them. If this prevail not, she will try the powerful eloquence of tears, she wept before him the rest of the days of the feast, choosing rather to mar the mirth, as the bride's tears must do, than not gain her point, and oblige her countrymen, ver. 17. (2.) With great success. At last, being quite wearied with her importunity, he told her what was the meaning of his riddle, and though we may suppose the promised secrecy, and that if he would but let her know, she would tell no body, she immediately told it to the children of her people; nor could he expect better from a Philistine, especially when the interests of her country were never so little concerned. See Micah vii. 5, 6. The riddle is at length unriddled, ver. 18. *What is sweeter than honey, or a better meat, Prov. xxiv. 13. What is stronger than a lion, or a greater devourer*? Samson generally owns they had won the wager, though he had good reason to dispute it, because they had not declared the riddle, as the bargain was, ver. 12. but it had been declared to them. But he only thought fit to tell them of it. *If ye had not ploughed with my heifer, made use of your interest with my wife, you had not found out my riddle*. Satan in his temptations could not do us the mischief he doth, if he did not plough with the heifer of our own corrupt nature.

6. Samson pays his wager to these Philistines with the spoils of others of their countrymen, ver. 19. He took this occasion to quarrel with the Philistines, went down to Askelon, one of their cities, where probably he knew there was some great festival observed at this time, to which many flocked, out of whom he picked out thirty, slew them, and took their clothes, and gave them to those that had expounded the riddle: So that in balancing the account, it appeared that the Philistines were the losers, for one of the lives they lost was worthy all the suits of clothes they won, for the body is more than raiment. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, both to authorize and enable him to do this.

Lastly, This proves a good occasion of weaning Samson from his new relations. He found how his companions had abused him, and his wife had betrayed him, and therefore his anger was kindled, ver. 19. Better be angry with Philistines, than in love with them, because when we join ourselves to them we are most in danger of being ensnared by them. And meeting with this ill usage among them, he went up to his father's house. It were well for us, if the unkindnesses we meet with from the world, and our disappointments in it, had but this good effect upon us, to oblige us by faith and prayer to turn to our heavenly Father's house, and rest there. The inconveniences that occur in our way, should make us love home, and long to be there. No sooner was he gone, but his wife was disposed of to another, ver. 20. Instead of begging his pardon for the wrong she had done him, when he justly signified his resentment of it, only by withdrawing in displeasure for a time, she presently marries him that was the chief of the guests, the friend of the bridegroom, whom perhaps she loved too well, and was too willing to oblige, when she got her husband to tell her the riddle. See how little confidence is to be put in man, when those may prove our enemies whom we have used as our friends.

C H A P. XV.

Samson, when he had courted an alliance with the Philistines, did but seek an occasion against them, chap. xiv. 4. Now here we have a further account of the occasions he took to weaken them, and to avenge not his own, but Israel's quarrels upon them. Every thing here is surprising; if any thing be thought incredible because impossible, it must be remembered, that with God nothing is impossible, and it was by the Spirit of the Lord coming upon him, that he was both directed to, and strengthened for, those unusual ways of making war. 1. From the perfidiousness of his wife and her father, he took occasion to burn their corn, ver. 1—5. 2. From the Philistines barbarous cruelty to his wife and her father, he took occasion to smite them with a great slaughter, ver. 6—8. 3. From the treachery of his own countrymen, who delivered

delivered him bound to the Philistines, he took occasion to kill one thousand of them with the jaw-bone of an ass, ver. 9—17. 4. From the distress he was then in want of water, God took occasion to shew him favour in a seasonable supply, ver. 18—20.

1. **B**UT it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat-harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in. 2. And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her, therefore I gave her to thy companion: is not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her. 3. ¶ And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure. 4. And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took fire-brands, and turned tail to tail, and put a fire-brand in the midst between two tails. 5. And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing-corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing-corn, with the vineyards and olives. 6. ¶ Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? and they answered, Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire. 7. ¶ And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease. 8. And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter: and he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam.

Here is, 1. Samson's return to his wife, whom he had left in displeasure, not hearing, perhaps, that she was given to another, when time had a little cooled his resentments, he came back to her, visited her with a kid, ver. 1. The value of the present was inconsiderable, but it was intended as a token of reconciliation, and perhaps was then so used, when those that had been at variance were brought together again: he sent this that he might sup with her in her apartment, and she with him on his provision, and so they might be friends again. It was generously done of Samson, though he was the party offended, and the superior relation, to whom therefore she was bound in duty to have addressed for peace, to make the first motion of reconciliation. When differences happen between near relations, let those be ever reckoned the wisest and best that are most forward to forgive and forget injuries, and most willing to stoop and yield for peace-sake.

2. The repulse he met with; her father forbid him to come near her, for truly he had married her to another, ver. 2. He endeavours, (1.) To justify himself in this wrong, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her. A very ill opinion he had of Samson, measuring that Nazarite by the common temper of the Philistines; could he think worse of him, than to suspect, that because he was justly angry with his wife, he utterly hated her, and because he had seen cause to return to his father's house for a while, therefore he had abandoned her for ever? Yet this is all he had to say in excuse of this injury. Thus he made the worst of jealousies to patronize the worst of robberies. But it will never bear us out in doing ill to say, we thought others designed ill. (2.) He endeavours to pacify Samson, by offering him his younger daughter, which, because the handsomer, he thought Samson might accept, in full recompence for the wrong. See what confusions those did admit, and bring their families to, that were not governed by the fear and law of God; marrying a daughter this week to one, and next week to another; giving a man one daughter first, and then another. Samson scorned his proposal, he knew better things than to take a woman to her sister, Lev. xviii. 18.

3. The revenge Samson took upon the Philistines for this abuse. Had he designed herein only to plead his own cause, he would have challenged his rival, and would have chastized him and his father-in-law only. But he looks upon himself as a public person, and the affront as done to the whole nation of Israel, for, probably, they put this slight upon him, because he was of that nation, and pleased themselves with it, that they had put such an abuse upon an Israelite; and therefore he resolves to do the Philistines a displeasure, and doth not doubt for this treatment he had met with among them would justify him in it, ver. 3. Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines. He had done what became him, in offering to be reconciled to his wife, but she having rendered it impracticable, now they could not blame him if he shewed his just resentments. Note, When differences arise, we ought to do our duty in order to the ending of them, and then whatever the ill consequences of them may be, we shall be blameless. Now the way Samson took to be revenged on them, was by setting their corn-fields on fire, which would be a great weakening and impoverishing to the country, ver. 4, 5. (1.) The method he took to do it was very odd; he sent one hundred and fifty couple of foxes, tied tail to tail, into the corn-fields, each couple had a stick of fire between their tails, with which being terrified, they run into the corn for shelter, and so set fire to it; thus the fire would break out in many places at the same time, and therefore could not be conquered, especially if it were done, as it is probable it was, in the night. He might have employed men to do it, but perhaps he could not find Israelites enough that had courage to do it, and himself could do it but in one place at a time, which would not effect his purpose. We never find Samson in any of his exploits, making use of any person whatsoever, either servant or soldier, therefore in this project he chooseth to make use of foxes as his incendiaries. They had injured Samson by their subtilty and malice, and now Samson returns the injury by subtle foxes and mischievous fire-brands. By the meanness and weakness of the animals he employed, he designed to put contempt upon the enemies he fought against. This stratagem is oft alluded to, to shew how the Church's adversaries that are of different interests and designs among themselves, that look and draw contrary ways in other things, yet have often united in a fire-brand, some cursed project or other to waste the Church of God, and particularly to kindle the fire or division in it. (2.) The mischief he hereby did to the Philistines was very great. It was in the time of wheat-harvest, ver. 1. so that the straw being dry, it soon burnt both the shocks of corn that were cut, and the standing corn, and the vineyards and olives. This was a waste of the good creatures, but where other acts of hostility are lawful, destroying the forage,

is justly reckoned to be so. If he might take away their lives, he might take away their livelihoods: and God was righteous in it, the corn, and the wine, and the oil, which they had prepared for Dagon to be a meat-offering to him, was thus in the season thereof made a burnt-offering to God's justice.

4. The Philistines outrage against Samson's treacherous wife and her father, understanding that they had provoked Samson to do this mischief to the country, the rabble set upon them and burnt them with fire, perhaps in their own house, ver. 6. Samson himself they durst not attack, and therefore with more justice than perhaps they themselves designed in it, they reek their quarrel upon those, who they could not but own had given him cause to be angry. Instead of taking vengeance upon Samson, they took vengeance for him, when he, out of respect to the relation he had stood in to them, was not willing to do it for himself. See his hand in it to whom vengeance belongs; those that deal treacherously shall be spoiled and dealt treacherously with, and the Lord is known by these judgments which he executeth; especially when, as here, he makes use of his people's enemies as instruments for revenging his people's quarrels one upon another. When a barbarous Philistine sets fire to a treacherous one, the righteous may rejoice to see the vengeance, Psal. lxxxv. 10, 11. Thus shall the wrath of man praise thee, Psal. lxxvi. 10. The Philistines had threatened Samson's wife, that if she would not get the riddle out of him, they would burn her and her father's house with fire, chap. xiv. 15. She, to save herself, and oblige her countrymen, betrayed her husband, and what came of it? The very thing that she feared, and sought by sin to avoid, came upon her, she and her father's house were burnt with fire, and her countrymen, whom she sought to oblige by the wrong she did to her husband, brought it upon her. The mischief we seek to escape by any unlawful practices we often pull upon our own heads. He that will thus save his life shall lose it.

5. The occasion Samson took from hence to do them yet a greater mischief which touched their bone and their flesh, ver. 7, 8. Though ye have done this to them, and thereby shewed what you would do to me if you could, yet that shall not deter me from being further vexations to you. Or, though you think by doing this you have made me satisfaction for the affront I received among you, yet I have Israel's cause to plead as a public person, and for the wrongs done to them I will be avenged on you, and if you will then forbear your insults, I will cease, aiming at no more but the deliverance of Israel. So he smote them hip and thigh with a great stroke. So the word is. We suppose the wounds he gave them to have been mortal, as wounds in the hip or thigh often prove, and therefore translate it, with a great slaughter. Some think he only lamed them, disabled them for service, as horses were houghed or ham-strung. It seems to be a phrase used to express a desperate attack, he killed them pell-mell, or routed them horse and foot. He smote them with his hip upon thigh, i. e. with the strength he had not in his arms and hands, but in his hips and thighs, for he kicked and spurned at them, and so mortified them, trod them in his anger, and trampled them in his fury, Isa. lxiii. 3. And, when he had done, he retired to a natural fortress in the top of the rock Etam, where he waited to see whether the Philistines would be tamed by the correction he had given them.

9. ¶ Then the Philistines went up and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi. 10. And the men of Judah, said, Why are ye come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him, as he hath done to us. 11. Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? What is this that thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them. 12. And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves. 13. And they spake unto him, laying, No: but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock. 14. ¶ And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands. 15. And he found a new jaw-bone of an ass, and put forth his hand and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith. 16. And Samson said, With the jaw-bone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw-bone of an ass, have I slain a thousand men. 17. And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jaw-bone out of his hand, and called that place Ramath-lehi.

Here is, 1. Samson violently pursued by the Philistines. They went up in a body, a more formidable force than they had together when Samson smote them hip and thigh, and they pitched in Judah, and spread themselves up and down the country to find out Samson, whom they heard was come this way, ver. 9. When the men of Judah, who had tamely submitted to their yoke, pleaded that they had paid their tribute, and that none of their tribe had given them any offence, they freely own they designed nothing in this invasion but to seize Samson; they would fight neither against small nor great, but only that Judge of Israel, ver. 10. to do to him, as he hath done to us, i. e. to smite his hip and thigh, as he did ours, eye for an eye. Here was an army come against one man, for indeed he was himself an army. Thus a whole band of men was sent to seize our Lord Jesus, that blessed Samson, though a tenth part would have served now his hour was come, and ten times as many would have done nothing, if he had not yielded.

2. Samson basely betrayed and delivered up by the men of Judah, ver. 11. Of Judah were they? degenerate branches of that valiant tribe? utterly unworthy to carry in their standard the lion of the tribe of Judah. Perhaps they were disaffected to Samson because he was not of their tribe; out of a foolish fondness for their forfeited precedence, they would rather be oppressed by Philistines, then rescued by a Danite. Often has the Church's deliverance

deliverance been obstructed by such jealousies, and niceness of a point of honour. Rather it was because they stood in awe of the Philistines, and were willing, at any rate, to get them out of their country. If their spirits had not been perfectly cowed, and broken by their sins and troubles, and they had not been given up to a spirit of slumber, they would have taken this fair opportunity to shake off the Philistines yoke. If they had had the least spark of ingenuity and courage remaining in them, having so brave a man as Samson was to head them, they would now have made one bold struggle for the recovery of their liberty, but they that had debased themselves to hell in the worship of their dunghill-gods, *Iju. lvii. 9.* no marvel if they thus debased themselves to the dust, in submission to their insulting oppressors. Sin dispirits men, nay, it infatuates them, and hides from their eyes the things that belong to their peace. Probably, Samson went into the border of that country to offer his service, *supposing his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them*, as Moses did, *Act. vii. 25.* But they thrust him from them, and very disingenuously, (1.) Blamed him for what he had done against the Philistines, as if he had done them a great injury. Such ungrateful returns have those often received that have done the best service imaginable to their country. Thus our Lord Jesus did many good works, and for those they were ready to stone him. (2.) They begged of him that he would suffer them to bind him, and deliver him up to the Philistines. Cowardly unthankful wretches! fond of their fetters, and in love with servitude! Thus the Jews delivered up our Saviour, under pretence of a fear, lest the Romans should come and take away their place and nation. With what a sordid servile spirit do they argue, *Knowest thou not that the Philistines rule over us?* And whose fault was that? they knew they had no right to rule over them, nor had they been sold into their hands, if they had not first *sold themselves to work wickedness.*

3. Samson tamely yielding to be bound by his countrymen, and delivered into the hands of his enraged enemies, *ver. 12, 13.* How easily could he have beaten them off, and kept the top of his rock against these three thousand men, and none of them all could, or durst, have laid hands on him? but he patiently submitted, (1.) That he might give an example of great meekness, mixed with great strength and courage, as one that had rule over his own spirit, he knew how to yield, as well as how to conquer. (2.) That by being delivered up to the Philistines, he might have an opportunity of making a slaughter among them. (3.) That he might be a type of Christ, who when he had shewed what he could do in striking those down that came to seize him, yielded to be bound, and led as a *lamb to the slaughter.* Samson justified himself in what he had done against the Philistines, as they did to me, so I did to them, it was a piece of necessary justice, and they ought not to retaliate it upon me, for they began. He indents with the men of Judah, that if he put himself into their hands they should not fall upon him themselves, because then he should be tempted to fall upon them, which he was very loth to do. This they promised him, *ver. 13.* and then he surrendered. The men of Judah being his betrayers, were in effect his murderers; they would not kill him themselves, but they did that which was worse, they delivered him into the hands of the uncircumcised Philistines, who they knew would do worse than kill him, would abuse and torment him to death. Perhaps they thought, as some think Judas did, when he betrayed Christ, that he would by his great strength deliver himself out of their hands; but if he did, that was no thanks to them, and if they thought he would, they might of themselves have thought this again, that he could and would have delivered them too, if they would have stuck to him, and made him their head. Justly is their misery prolonged, who, to oblige their worst enemies, thus abuse their best friend. Never were men so befitted, except those who thus treated our blessed Saviour.

4. Samson making his part good against the Philistines, even then when he was delivered into their hands, first pinioned with two new cords. The Philistines, when they had him among them, *shouted against him, ver. 14.* So triumphing in their success, and insulting over him; if God had not tied their hands faster than the men of Judah had tied his, they would have shot at him (as their archers did at Saul) to dispatch him presently, rather than have shouted at him, and given him time to help himself. But their security and joy was a prelude of their ruin. When they shouted against him as a man run down, confident that all was their own, then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, came mightily upon him, inspired him with more than ordinary strength and resolution. Thus fired, (1.) He presently got clear of his bonds, the two new cords, upon the first struggle he gave, broke, and were melted (as the original word is) from off his hands, no doubt, to the great amazement and terror of those that shouted against him, whose shouts were hereby turned into shrieks. Observe, When the Spirit of the Lord came upon him his cords were loosed; where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, and those are free indeed, who are thus freed. This typified the resurrection of Christ by the power of the Spirit of holiness; in it he loosed the bands of death, and its cords, the grave-clothes fell from his hands, without being loosed as Lazarus's were, because it was impossible that mighty Saviour should be holden of them; and thus he triumphed over the powers of darkness that shouted against him, as if they had him sure. (2.) He made a great destruction among the Philistines, who all gathered about him to make sport with him, *ver. 15.* See how poorly he was armed, he had no better weapon than the jaw-bone of an ass, and yet what execution he did with it, he never laid it out of his hand, till he had with it laid a thousand Philistines dead upon the spot; and thus that promise was more than accomplished, *one of you shall chase a thousand, Josh. xxiii. 10.* A jaw-bone was an unready thing to gripe, and one would think might easily be wrestled out of his hand, and that a few such blows as he gave with it should have crushed and broken it, and yet it held good to the last. Had it been the jaw-bone of a lion, especially that which he himself had slain, it might have helped to heighten his fancy, and to make himself the more formidable; but to take the bone of that despicable animal, was to do wonders by the foolish things of the world, that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of man. One of David's worthies slew three hundred Philistines at once, but it was with a spear, *1 Chron. xi. 11.* Another slew of them till his hand was weary and stuck to his sword, *1 Sam. xxiii. 10.* But they all come short of Samson. What could be thought too hard, too much for him to do on whom the Spirit of the Lord came mightily. *Through God we shall do valiantly.* It was strange the men of Judah did not now come in to his aid; cowards can strike a falling enemy: but he was to be a type of him that trod the wine-press alone.

5. Samson's celebrating his own victory, since the men of Judah could not even do that for him; he composed a short song, which he sung to himself, for the daughters of Israel did not meet him, as afterwards they did Saul, to sing with more reason, *Samson had slain his thousands.* The burden of his song was, *With the jaw-bone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, have I slain a thousand men, ver. 16.* The same word in Hebrew (Chamor) signifies both an ass and a heap, which makes this an elegant paronomasia, and represents the Philistines falling as tamely as asses. He also gave a name to the place, to perpetuate the Philistines disgrace, *ver. 17.* Ramath-lehi, the lifting up of the jaw-bone. Yet did not vain-gloriously carry the bone about with him

for a shew, but threw it away when he had done with it. So little were relics valued then.

18. ¶ And he was sore athirst, and called on the LORD, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: And now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised? 19. But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout: and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof En-hakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day. 20. And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

Here is, 1. The distress Samson was in after this great performance, *ver. 18.* He was sore athirst. It was a natural effect of the great heat he had been in, and the great pains he had taken; his zeal consumed him, eat him up, and made him forget himself, till when he had time to pause a little, he found himself reduced to the last extremity for want of water, and ready to faint. Perhaps there was a special hand of God in it, as there was in the whole transaction; and God would hereby keep him from being proud of his great strength and great achievements, and let him know that he was but a man, and liable to the calamities that are common to men. And Josephus saith, it was designed to chastise him for not making mention of God and his hand, in his memorial of the victory he had obtained, but taking all the praise to himself; *I have slain a thousand men*; now he is ready to die for thirst, he is under a sensible conviction that his own arm could not have saved him, without God's right hand or arm. Samson had drunk largely of the blood of the Philistines, but blood will never quench any man's thirst. Providence so ordered it, that there was no water near him, and he was so fatigued that he could not go far to seek it; the men of Judah, one would think, should have met him, now he was come off a conqueror with bread and wine, as Melchizedek did Abram, to atone for the injury they had done him; but so little notice did they take of their deliverer, that he was ready to perish for want of a draught of water. Thus are the greatest flights often put upon those that do the greatest services. Christ on the cross said, *I thirst.*

2. His prayer to God in this distress. Those that forget to attend God with their praises, may perhaps be compelled to attend him with their prayers. Afflictions are often sent to bring unthankful people to God. Two things he pleads with God in this prayer. (1.) His having experienced the power and goodness of God in his late success. *Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant.* He owns himself God's servant in what he had been doing, Lord, wilt thou not own a poor servant of thine that has spent himself in thy service? *I am thine, save me.* He calls his victory a deliverance, a great deliverance, for if God had not helped him, he had not only not conquered the Philistines, but had been swallowed up by them. He owns it to come from God, and now corrects his former error, in assuming it too much to himself, and this he pleads in his present strait: Note, Past experiences of God's power and goodness, are excellent pleas in prayer for further mercy. Lord, thou hast delivered often, wilt thou not deliver still? *2 Cor. i. 10.* Thou has begun, wilt thou not finish? Thou has done the greater, wilt thou not do the lesser? *Psal. lvi. 13.* (2.) His being now exposed to his enemies. *Lest I fall into the hands of the uncircumcised,* and then they will triumph, will tell it in Gath, and in the streets of Askelon; and will it not redound to God's dishonour, if his champion became so easy a prey to the uncircumcised? The best pleas are those taken from God's glory.

3. That seasonable relief God sent him. God heard his prayer, and sent him water, either out of the bone, or out of the earth through the bone, *ver. 19.* That bone which he had made an instrument of God's service, God, to recompense him, made an instrument of his supply. But I rather incline to our marginal reading, *God clave a hollow place that was in Lehi*; the place of this action was, from the jaw-bone, called Lehi; even before the action we find it so named, *ver. 9—14.* And there in that field, or hill, or plain, or whatever it was, that was so called, God caused a fountain suddenly and seasonably to open just by him, and water to spring up out of it in abundance, which continued a well ever after. Of this fair water he drank, and his spirits revived. We should be more thankful for the mercy of water, did we consider how ill we can spare it. And this instance of Samson's relief should encourage us to trust in God, and seek to him, for when he pleaseth he can open rivers in high places. See *Isa. xli. 17, 18.*

4. The memorial of this, in the name Samson gave this upstart fountain, En-hakkore, the well of him that cried, thereby keeping in remembrance, both his own distress, which occasioned him to cry, and God's favour to him, in answer to his cry. Many a spring of comfort God opens to his people, which may fitly be called by his name, it is the well of him that cried. Samson had given a name to the place, which spake him great and triumphant, Ramath-lehi, the lifting up of the jaw-bone; but here he gives it another name, which speaks him wanting and dependent.

Lastly, The continuance of Samson's government after these achievements, *ver. 20.* At length Israel submitted to him whom they had betrayed. Now it was past dispute that God was with him, so that henceforward they all owned him, and were directed by him as their judge; the stone which the builders refused became the head-stone. It intimates the low condition of Israel, that the government was dated by the days of the Philistines; yet it was a mercy to Israel, that though they were oppressed by a foreign enemy, yet they had a judge that preferred order, and kept them from ruining one another. Twenty years his government continued, according to the usage of the judges administration; but of the particulars we have not account, save of the beginning of his government in this chapter, and the end of it in the next.

C H A P. XIV.

Samson's name (we have observed before) signifies a little sun (so parvus); we have seen this sun rising very bright, and his morning ray strong and clear, and nothing appearing to the contrary, we take it for granted, that the middle of the day was proportionably illustrious, while he judged Israel twenty years: but the melancholy story of this chapter gives us such an account of his evening, as did not commend his day. This little sun set under a cloud, and yet just in the setting, darted forth one such strong and glorious beam, as made him even then a type of Christ, conquering by death. Here is, 1. Samson greatly endangered by his familiarity with one harlot, and hardly escaping, *ver. 1—3.* 2. Samson quite

quite ruined by his familiarity with another harlot, Delilah. Observe, 1. How he was betrayed to her by his own lust, ver. 4. 2. How he was betrayed by her to his sworn enemies, the Philistines, who, 1. By her means got it out of him at last where his great strength lay, ver. 5—17. 2. They robbed him of his strength, by taking from his head the crown of his separation, ver. 18—20. 3. Then seized him, blinded him, imprisoned him, abused him, and at a solemn festival made a shew of him, ver. 21—25. But, lastly, he avenged himself of them, by pulling down the theatre upon their heads, and so dying with them, ver. 26—31.

1. **T**HEN went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her. 2. And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night, in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him. 3. And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron.

Here is, 1. Samson's sin, ver. 1. His taking a Philistine to wife in the beginning of his time was excusable, but to join himself to a harlot, that he accidentally saw amongst them, was such a profanation of his honour, as an Israelite, as a Nazarite, that we cannot but blush to read it, *Tell it not in Gath*. This vile impurity makes the graceful visage of this Nazarite blacker than a coal, Lam. iv. 7, 8. We find not that Samson had any business to Gaza; if he went thither in quest of a harlot, it would make one willing to hope, that as bad as things were otherwise, there were no prostitutes among the daughters of Israel. Some think he went thither to observe what posture the Philistines were in, that he might get some advantage against them; if so, he forgot his business, neglected that, and so fell into this snare. His sin began in his eye, with which he should have made a covenant; he saw there one in the attire of an harlot, and the lust which conceived brought forth sin, he went in unto her.

2. Samson's danger; notice was sent to the magistrates of Gaza, perhaps by the treacherous harlot herself, that Samson was in the town, ver. 2. Probably he came in a disguise, or in the dusk of the evening, went into an inn, or public-house, which happened to be kept by this harlot. The gates of the city were hereupon shut, guards set, all kept quiet, that Samson might suspect no danger, now they thought they had him in a pound, and doubted not but to be the death of him the next morning. O that all those who indulge their sensual appetites in drunkenness, uncleanness, or any fleshly lusts, would see themselves thus surrounded, way-laid, and marked for ruin by their spiritual enemies! The faster they sleep, and the more secure they are, the greater is their danger.

3. Samson's escape, ver. 3. He rose at midnight, perhaps roused by a dream, in slumberings upon the bed, (*Job xxxiii. 15.*) by his guardian angel, or rather by the checks of his own conscience; he rose in a penitent abhorrence (we hope) of the sin he was now in, and of himself because of it, and a pious resolution not to return to it; rose under an apprehension of the danger he was in, that he was as one that slept upon the top of a mast, rose with such thoughts as these; is this a bed fit for a Nazarite to sleep in? Shall a temple of the living God be thus polluted? Can I be safe under this guilt? It was bad that he lay down without such checks, but it would have been worse, if he had lain still under them. Straight he makes towards the gate of the city, probably finds the guards asleep, else he had made them sleep their last, stays not to break open the gates, but plucks up the posts, takes them gates and bar and all, all very large and strong, and a vast weight, yet he carries them on his back several miles, up to the top of a hill, in disdain of their attempt to secure him with gates and bars, designing thus to render himself more formidable to the Philistines, and more acceptable to his people; thus to give a proof of the great strength God had given him, and a type of Christ's victory over death and the grave. He not only rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and so came forth himself, but carried away the gates of the grave, bar and all, and so left it, ever after, and open prison to all that are his; it shall not, it cannot, always detain them. O death, where is thy sting? where are thy gates? thanks be to him, that not only gained a victory for himself, but giveth us the victory!

4. ¶ And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. 5. And the Lord of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver. 6. And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee. 7. And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withs that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man. 8. Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withs, which had not been dried, and she bound him with them. 9. (Now there were men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber.) And she said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withs, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire: so his strength was not known. 10. And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound. 11. And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man. 12. Delilah therefore took new ropes, and

bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. (And there were liers in wait abiding in the chamber.) And he brake them from off his arms like a thread. 13. And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web. 14. And she fastened it with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web. 15. ¶ And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? Thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth. 16. And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death; 17. That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head: for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: If I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.

The burnt child dreads the fire; yet Samson, that has more than the strength of a man, in this comes short of the wisdom of a child; for though he had been more than once brought into the highest degree of mischief and danger by the love of women, and lusting after them, yet he would not take warning, but here is again taken in the same snare, and this third time pays for all. Solomon seems to refer especially to this story of Samson, when in his caution against uncleanness, he gives this account of a whorish woman, *Prov. vii. 26.* That she hath cast down many wounded, yea, many strong men have been slain by her. And chap. vi. 26. That the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. This ill woman that brought Samson to ruin, is her named Delilah, an infamous name, and fitly used to express the person, or thing, that by flattery or falsehood brings mischief and destruction on those to whom kindness is pretended. See here,

1. The affection Samson had for Delilah, he loved her, ver. 4. some think she was his wife, but then he would have had her home to his own house; others, that he courted her to make her his wife; but there is too much reason to suspect that it was a sinful affection he had for her, and that he lived in uncleanness with her; whether she was an Israelite or a Philistine, is not certain. If an Israelite, which is scarce probable, yet she had the heart of a Philistine.

2. The interest which the lords of the Philistines made with her to betray Samson, ver. 5. (1.) That which they told here they designed, was to humble him or afflict him; they would promise not to do him any hurt, only they would disable him to do them any. And so much conscience it should seem they made of this promise, that even then, when he lay never so much at their mercy, they would not kill him, no, not when the razor that cut his hair, might sooner and easier have cut his throat. (2.) That which they desired, in order hereunto, was to know where his great strength lay, and by what means he might be bound. Perhaps they imagined he had some spell or charm, which he carried about with him, by the force of which he did these great things, and doubted not, but if they could get that from him, he would be manageable; and therefore having had reason enough formerly to know which was his blind-side, hoped to find out his riddle a second time by ploughing with his heifer, they engaged Delilah to get it out of him, telling her what a kindness it would be to them, and perhaps, assuring her it should not be improved to any real mischief, either to him or her. (3.) For this they bid high, promised to give her each of them eleven hundred pieces of silver, fifty-five hundred in all. So many shekels, reckoned to above one thousand pounds sterling; with this she was hired to betray one she pretended to love; see what horrid wickedness the love of money is the root of. Our blessed Saviour was thus betrayed by one whom he called friend, and with a kiss too, for filthy lucre. They that are unchaste, as Delilah, no marvel if they be unjust; such as lose their honesty in one instance will in another.

3. The arts by which he put her off from time to time, and kept his own counsel a great while. She asked him, where his great strength lay, and whether it were possible for him to be bound and afflicted, ver. 6. pretending she desired only he would satisfy her curiosity in that one thing, and that she thought it was impossible he should be bound, otherwise than by her charms. When she urged him very much, he told her, (1.) That he might be bound with seven green withs, ver. 7. The experiment was tried; ver. 8. but it would not do, he broke the withs as easily as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire, ver. 9. (2.) When she still continued her importunity, ver. 10. he told her, that with two new ropes he might be so cramped and hampered, that he might be as easily dealt with as any other man, ver. 11. This experiment was tried too, but it failed, the new ropes broke from off his arm like a thread, ver. 12. (3.) When she still pressed him to communicate the secret, and upbraided him with it, as an unkindness that he had bantered her so long; he then told her, that the weaving of the seven locks of his head would make a great alteration in him, ver. 13. This came nearer the matter than any thing he had yet said, but it would not do; his strength appeared to be very much in his hair, when upon the trial of this, purely by the strength of his hair, he carried away the pin of the beam and the web.

Now in the making of all these experiments, it is hard to say, whether there appears more of Samson's weakness or Delilah's wickedness. (1.) Could any thing be more wicked, than her restless and unreasonable importunity with him, to discover a secret, which she knew would endanger his life, if it were lodged any where but in his own breast. What could be more base and disingenuous, more false and treacherous, than to lay his head in her lap, as one whom she loved, and at the same time to design the betraying of him to those by whom he was mortally hated? (2.) Could any thing be more weak, than for him to continue a parley with one, that he so plainly saw was aiming to do him a mischief, that he should lend an ear so long to such an impudent request, that she might know how to do him a mischief; that when he had perceived liers in wait for him in the chamber, and that they were ready to apprehend him, if they had been able, he did not immediately quit the chamber, with a resolution never to come into it any more; nay, that he should again lay his head in that lap, out of which he had been so often roused with that alarm, the Philistines are upon thee, Samson?

Samson? One can hardly imagine a man so perfectly befotted, and void of all consideration, as Samson now was; but whoredom is one of those things that take away the heart. It is hard to say what Samson meant, in suffering her to try so often whether she could weaken and afflict him; some think he did not certainly know where his strength lay, but that it should seem he did, for when he told her that which would mortify him indeed, it is said, *he told her all his heart.* It seems he designed to banter her, and to try if he could turn it off with a jest, and to baffle the *liars in wait*, and make fools of them; but it was very unwise in him that he did not quit the field, as soon as ever he perceived that he was not able to keep his ground.

4. The discovery he at last made of this great secret, and if the discovery proved fatal to him, he must thank himself, who had not power to keep his own counsel from one that manifestly sought his ruin. *Surely in ruin is the net spread in the sight of any bird*, but in Samson's sight is the net spread, and yet he is taken in it. If he had not been blind before the Philistines put out his eyes, he might have seen himself betrayed. Delilah signifies a consumer; she was so to him. Observe, 1. How she teased him, telling him she will not believe he loves her, unless he will gratify her in this matter, *ver. 15. How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me?* i. e. when thou canst not trust me with the counsels of thy heart. Passionate lovers cannot bear to have their love called in question: they would do any thing rather than their sincerity should be suspected; here therefore Delilah had this fond fool (excuse me that I call him so) at an advantage. This expostulation is indeed grounded upon a great truth, that those only have our love, not that have our good words or our good wishes, but that have our hearts. That is love without dissimulation; but it is falsehood and flattery in the highest degree, to say we love those with whom our hearts are not. How can we say we love either our brother, whom we have seen, or God, whom we have not seen, if our hearts be not with them? She continued many days vexatious to him with her importunity, so that he had no pleasure of his life with her, *ver. 16. why then did he not leave her?* It was because he was captivated to her by the power of love, falsely so called, but truly lust. This bewitched and perfectly intoxicated him, and by the force of it, see, 2. How she conquered him, *ver. 17. He told her all his heart.* God left him to himself to do this foolish thing, to punish him for indulging himself in the lusts of uncleanness. The angel that foretold his birth said nothing of his great strength, but only that he should be a Nazarite, and particularly that *no razor should come upon his head*, chap. xiii. 5. His consecration to God was to be his strength, for he was to be *strengthened according to the glorious power of that Spirit which wrought in him mightily*, that his strength, by promise, not by nature, might be a type and figure of the spiritual strength of believers, *Col. i. 11—29.* Therefore the badge of his consecration was the pledge of his strength; if he lose the former he knows he forfeits the latter. If I be shaven, I am no longer a Nazarite, and then my strength is gone. The making of his bodily strength to depend so much on his hair, which could have no natural influence upon it, either one way or other, teacheth us to magnify divine institutions, and to expect God's grace, and the continuance of it, only in the use of these means of grace, wherein he has appointed us to attend upon him, the word, sacraments, and prayer. In these earthen vessels is this treasure.

18. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand. 19. And she made him sleep upon her knees, and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head, and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. 20. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him. 21. ¶ But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison-house.

We have here the fatal consequences of Samson's folly in betraying his own strength; he soon paid dear for it. *A whore is a deep ditch; he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein.* In that pit Samson sinks. Observe,

1. What care Delilah took to make sure of the money for herself. She now perceived by the manner of his speaking that he had told her all his heart, and the lords of the Philistines that hired her to do this base thing are sent for, but they must be sure to bring the money in their hands, *ver. 18.* The wages of unrighteousness are accordingly produced, unknown to Samson: it would grieve one's heart, to see one of the bravest men then in the world sold and brought, as a sheep for the slaughter; how doth this instance fully all the glory of man, and forbid the strong man ever to boast of his strength?

2. What course she took to deliver him up to them according to the bargain. Many in the world would, for the hundredth part of what was here given Delilah, sell those that they pretended the greatest respect for. *Trust not in a friend then, put not confidence in a guide.* See what a treacherous method she took, *ver. 10. she made him sleep upon her knees.* Josephus saith, she gave him some intoxicating liquor, which laid him to sleep; what opiates she might steal into his cup we know not; but we cannot suppose that he knowingly drank wine or strong drink, for that would have been a forfeiture of his Nazariteship, as much as the cutting off his hair. She pretended the greatest kindness then when she designed the greatest mischief; which yet she could not have compassed, if she had not made him sleep. See the fatal consequences of security; Satan ruins men by rocking them asleep, flattering them into a good opinion of their own safety, and so bringing them to mind nothing, and fear nothing, and then he robs them of their strength and honour, and leads them captive at his will. When we sleep, our spiritual enemies do not. When he was asleep she had a barber ready to cut off his hair, which he did so silently and so quickly that it did not awake him, but plainly afflicted him, even in his sleep, his spirit manifestly sunk upon it. I think we may suppose, that if this ill turn had been done him in his sleep by some spiteful body, without his being himself accessory to it, as he was here, it would not have had this strange effect upon him; but it was his own wickedness that corrected him. It was his iniquity, else it had not been so much his infelicity.

3. What little concern he himself was in at it, *ver. 20.* He could not but miss his hair as soon as he awoke, and yet said, *I will shake myself, as at other times, after sleep; or as at other times, when the Philistines are upon me, to make my part good against them: Perhaps he thought to shake him-*

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self the easier, and that his head would feel the lighter, now his hair was cut, little thinking how much heavier the burden of guilt was than that of hair. He soon found in himself some change, we have reason to think so; and yet *wist not that the Lord was departed from him.* He did not consider that that was the reason of the change. Note, Many have lost the favourable presence of God, and are not aware of it; they have provoked God to withdraw from them, but are not sensible of their loss, nor ever complain of it. Their souls languish, and are grown weak, their gifts wither, every thing goes cross with them, and yet they impute not this to the right cause; they are not aware that *God is departed from them*, nor are they in any care to reconcile themselves to him, or to recover his favour. When God is departed, we cannot do as at other times.

4. What improvement the Philistines soon made of their advantages against him, *ver. 21.* The Philistines took him when God was departed from him; those that have thrown themselves out of God's protection become an easy prey to their enemies. If we sleep in the lap of our lusts, we shall certainly wake in the hands of the Philistines. It is probable they had promised Delilah not to kill him, but they took an effectual course to disable him, the first thing they did when they had him in their hands, and found they could manage him, was to *put out his eyes, by applying fire to them*, saith the Arabic version. They considered that his eyes would never come again as perhaps his hair might, and that the strongest arms could do little without eyes to guide them, and therefore, if now they blind him, they for ever blind him. His eyes were the inlets of his sin; he saw the harlot at Gaza, and went in unto her, *ver. 1.* and now his punishment began there. Now the Philistines had blinded him, he had time to remember how his own lust had blinded him. The best preservative of the eyes is to turn them away from beholding vanity. *They brought him down to Gaza*, that there he might appear in weakness, where he had lately given such proofs of his strength, *ver. 3.* and be a jest to those to whom he had been a terror. *They bound him with fetters of brass*, who had before been held in the cords of his own iniquity, and he did *grind in the prison*, work in their Bridewell, either for their profit, or his punishment, or both. The devil doth thus by sinners, *blinds the minds of them which believe not*, and so enslaves them, and secures them in his interests. Poor Samson, how art thou fallen! how is thine honour laid in the dust! how is the glory and defence of Israel become the drudge and triumph of the Philistines! *The crown is fallen from his head; woe unto him, for he hath sinned.* Let all take warning by his fall carefully to preserve their purity, and to watch against all fleshly lusts; for all our glory is gone, and our defence departed from us, when the covenant of our separation to God, as spiritual Nazarites, is profaned.

22. Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven. 23. Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together, for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. 24. And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us. 25. And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison-house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars. 26. And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them. 27. Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there: and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport. 28. And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me; I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. 29. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. 30. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines: and he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein: so the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life. 31. Then his brethren, and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaoi, in the burying place of Manoah his father: and he judged Israel twenty years.

Though the last stage of Samson's life was inglorious, and one could wish there were a veil drawn over it, yet this account here given of his death, may be allowed to lessen, though it do not quite roll away the reproach of it, for there was honour in his death. No doubt, he greatly repented of his sin, the dishonour he had by it done to God, and his forfeiture of the honour God had put upon him; for that God was reconciled to him, appears, 1. By the return of the sign of his Nazariteship, *ver. 22. his hair began to grow again, as when he was shaven*, i. e. to be as thick and as long as when it was cut off. It is probable, their general thanksgiving to Dagon was not long deferred, before which Samson's hair was thus grown; by which, and the particular notice taken of it, it seems to have been extraordinary, and designed for a special indication of the return of God's favour to him upon his repentance. For the growth of his hair was neither cause nor sign of the return of his strength, further than as it was the badge of his consecration, and a token that God accepted him as a Nazarite again; after the interruption, without those ceremonies which were appointed for the restoration of a lapsed Nazarite, which he had not now the opportunity of performing, *Numb. vi. 9.* It is strange the Philistines, in whose hands he was, were not jealous of the growth of his hair again, and did not cut it; but perhaps they were willing his great strength should return to him, that they might have so much the more work out of him, and now he was blind, they were in no fear of any hurt from him.

2. By the use God made of him for the destruction of the enemies of his people, and that at a time when it would be most for the honour of God, and the vindication of that, and not immediately for the defence and deliverance of Israel. Observe,

1. How insolently the Philistines affronted the God of Israel. (1.) By the sacrifices they offered to Dagon, his rival. This Dagon they call their god, a god of their own making, represented by an image, the upper part of which was in the shape of a man, the lower part of a fish, purely the creature of fancy, yet it served them to set up in opposition to the true and living God. To this pretended deity they ascribe their success, *ver. 23, 24. Our god has delivered Samson our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, into our hands.* So they dreamed, though he could do neither good nor evil. They knew Delilah had betrayed him, and they had paid her for doing it, yet they attribute it to their god, and are confirmed by it in their belief of his power to protect them; all people who thus walk in the name of their gods, they will give them the praise of their achievements; and shall not we pay this tribute to our God whose kingdom ruleth over all? Yet considering what wicked arts they used to get Samson into their hands, it must be confessed it was only such a dunghill-deity as Dagon, that was fit to be made a patron of their villainies. Sacrifices were offered, and songs of praise sung on the general thanksgiving day for this victory obtained over one man, and great expressions of joy, and all to the honour of Dagon. Much more reason have we to give the praise of all our successes to our God; *Thanks be to him who causeth us to triumph in Christ Jesus.* (2.) By the sport they made with Samson, God's champion, they reflected on God himself. When they were merry with wine, to make them more merry, Samson must be fetched to make them sport, *ver. 25—27. i. e.* for them to make sport with. Having sacrificed to their god, and eat and drunk upon the sacrifice, they rose up to play, according to the usage of idolaters, *1 Cor. x. 7.* and Samson must be the fool in the play. They made themselves, and one another laugh, to see how, being blind, he stumbled and blundered: It is likely, they *smote this Judge of Israel upon the cheek*, (*Mic. v. 1.*) and said, *Prophecy who smote thee.* It was an instance of their barbarity, to trample thus upon a man in misery, at the sight of whom a while ago they would have trembled. It put Samson into the depth of misery, and as a sword in his bones were their reproaches, when they said, *Where is now thy God?* Nothing could be more grievous to so great a spirit; yet being a penitent, that makes him patient, and he accepts it as the punishment of his iniquity. How unrighteous forever the Philistines were, he could not but own that God was righteous. He had sported himself in his own deceivings, and with his own deceivers, and justly are the Philistines let loose upon him to make sport with him. Uncleanness is a sin that makes men vile, and exposes them to contempt; *a wound and dishonour shall he get*, whose heart is deceived by a woman, and his reproach *shall not be wiped away.* Everlasting shame and contempt will be the portion of those that are blinded and bound by their own lusts. The devil that deceived them will insult over them.

2. How justly the God of Israel brought sudden destruction upon them, by the hands of Samson. Thousands of the Philistines were got together, to attend their lords in the sacrifices and joys of this day, and to be the spectators of this comedy; but it proved to them a fatal tragedy, for they were all slain, and buried in the ruins of the house; whether it were a temple, or a theatre, or some slight building ran up for the purpose, is uncertain. Observe,

1. Who were destroyed, all the lords of the Philistines, *ver. 27.* who had by bribes corrupted Delilah to betray Samson to them. Evil pursued those sinners. Many of the people likewise, to the number of three thousand, and among them a great many women, one of which, it is likely, was that harlot of Gaza, mentioned *ver. 1.* Samson had been drawn into sin by the Philistine women, and now a great slaughter is made among them, as was by Moses's order among the women of Midian, because it was they that caused the children of Israel to trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, *Numb. xxxi. 16.*

2. When they were destroyed. (1.) When they were merry, secure and jovial, and far from apprehending themselves in any danger. When they saw Samson lay hold on the pillars, we may suppose it served them for a jest, and they made sport with that too; *what will this feeble Jew do?* How are sinners brought to desolation in a moment! They are lifted up in pride and mirth, that their fall may be the more dreadful. Let us never enjoy the mirth of wicked people, but infer from this instance, that their triumphing is short, and their joy but for a moment. (2.) It was when they were praising Dagon their god, and giving that honour to him which is due to God only; which is no less than treason against the King of kings, his crown and dignity; justly therefore is the blood of these traitors mingled with their sacrifices. Belsazzar was cut off when he was praising his made gods, *Dan. v. 4.* (3.) It was when they were making sport with an Israelite, a Nazarene, and insulting over him; persecuting him whom God had smitten. Nothing fills the measure of the iniquity of any person or people, faster than mocking and misusing the servants of God, yea, though it is by their own folly that they are brought low. Those know not what they do, nor whom they affront that make sport with a good man.

3. How they were destroyed. Samson pulled the house down upon them; God no doubt putting it into his heart, as a public person, thus to avenge God's quarrel with them, Israel's and his own. (1.) He gained strength to do it by prayer, *ver. 28.* That strength which he had lost by sin, like a true penitent, he recovers by prayer; as David, who when he had provoked the Spirit of grace to withdraw, prayed, *Psal. li. 12. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.* We may suppose this was only a mental prayer, and that his voice was not heard, for it was made in a noisy clamorous crowd of the Philistines, but though his voice was not heard of men, yet his prayer was heard of God and graciously answered, and though he lived not to give an account himself of this his prayer, as Nehemiah did of his, yet God not only accepted it in heaven, but by revealing it to the inspired penman, provided for the registering of it in his church. He prayed to God to remember him, and strengthen him this once, thereby owning that his strength for what he had already done, he had from God, and begs it might be afforded to him once more to give them a parting blow. That it was not from a principle of passion or personal revenge, but from a holy zeal for the glory of God and Israel, that he desired to do this, appears, by God's accepting and answering the prayer. Samson died praying, so did our blessed Saviour; but Samson prayed for vengeance, Christ for forgiveness. (2.) He gained opportunity to do it, by leaning on the two pillars which were the chief supports of the building, and were it seems so near together, that he could take hold of them both at one time, *ver. 26—29.* Having hold of them he bore them down with all his might, crying aloud, *Let me die with the Philistines*, *ver. 30. Animæque in vulnere ponit.* The vast concourse of people that was upon the roof looking down through it to see the sport, we may suppose contributed to the fall of it. A weight so much greater than ever it was designed to carry, might perhaps have sunk of itself, and made the fall more fatal to those within: And indeed few of either could escape being either stifled

or crushed to death. This was done, not by any natural strength of Samson, but by the almighty power of God, and is not only marvellous but miraculous in our eyes.

Now in this, 1. The Philistines were greatly mortified. All their lords and great men were killed, and abundance of their people, and this in the midst of their triumph; the temple of Dagon (as many think the house was) pulled down, and Dagon buried in it. This would give a great check to the insolence of the survivors, and if Israel had had but so much sense and spirit left them, as to improve the advantages of this juncture, they might now have thrown off the Philistines yoke. 2. Samson may very well be justified, and brought in not guilty of any sinful murder, either of himself or of the Philistines. He was a public person, a declared enemy of the Philistines, against whom he might therefore take all advantages; they were now in the most barbarous manner making war upon him, all present were aiding and abetting, and justly die with him. Nor was he any more *felo de se*, or a self murderer in it, for it was not his own life that he aimed at, though he had too much reason to be weary of it, but the lives of Israel's enemies, for the reaching of which he bravely resigned his own, *not counting it dear to him, so he might finish his course with honour.* 3. God was very much glorified, in pardoning Samson's great transgressions, of which this was an evidence. It has been said, that the prince's giving of a commission to one convicted amounts to a pardon. Yet though he was a God that forgave him, he took vengeance of his inventions, *Psal. xcix. 8.* And by suffering his champion to die in fetters, warned all to take heed of those lusts which war against the soul. However, we have good reason to hope, that though Samson died with the Philistines, he had not his everlasting portion with them. *The Lord knows them that are his.* 4. Christ was plainly typified. He pulled down the Devil's kingdom, as Samson did Dagon's temple, and when he died, obtained the most glorious victory over the powers of darkness. Then when his arms were stretched out upon the cross, as Samson's to the two pillars, he gave a fatal shake to the gates of hell, and through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, *Heb. ii. 14, 15.* And herein exceeded Samson, that he not only died with the Philistines, but rose again to triumph over them.

Lastly, The story of Samson concludes, (1.) With an account of his burial; his own relations, animated by the glories that attended his death, came and found out his body among the slain, brought it honourably to his own country, and buried it in the place of his father's sepulchres: the Philistines being in such a consternation, that they durst not oppose it. (2.) With the repetition of the account we had before of the continuance of his government, he judged Israel twenty years, and if they had not been as mean and sneaking, as he was brave and daring, he had left them clear of the Philistines yoke. They might have been easy, safe and happy, if they would but have given God and their judges leave to make them so.

C H A P. XVII.

All agree, that what is related in this, and the rest of the chapters to the end of this book, was not done, as the story is laid, after Samson, but long before, even soon after the death of Joshua, in the days of Phinehas the son of Eleazar, chap. xx. 28. But it is cast here into the latter part of the book, that it might not interrupt the history of the Judges. That it might appear how happy the nation was in the Judges, here is shewed how unhappy they were when there was none. 1. Then idolatry began in the family of Micah, chap. xvii. 2. Then it spread itself into the tribe of Dan, chap. xviii. 3. Then villainy was committed in Gibeah of Benjamin, chap. xix. 4. Then that whole tribe was destroyed for countenancing it, chap. xx. 5. Then odd sort of ways were taken to keep up that tribe, chap. xxi. Therefore blessed be God for the government we are under. In this chapter we are told how Micah an Ephraimite furnished himself, 1. With an image for his god, ver. 1—6. 2. With a Levite, such a one as he was, for his priest, ver. 7—13.

1. **A**ND there was a man of mount Ephraim whose name was Micah. 2. And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver, that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears; behold, the silver is with me, I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son. 3. And when he had restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD, from my hand, for my son to make a graven image, and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee. 4. Yet he restored the money unto his mother, and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image, and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah. 5. And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. 6. In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Here is, 1. Micah and his mother quarreling. (1.) The son robs the mother. The old woman had hoarded, with long scraping and saving, a great sum of money, eleven hundred pieces of silver. It is likely, she intended, when she died, to leave it to her son, in the mean time, it did her good to look upon it, and to count it over; the young man has a family of children grown up, for he had one of age to be a priest, *ver. 5.* He knows where to find his mother's cash, thinks he has more need of it than she has, cannot stay till she dies, and so takes it away privately for his own use. Though it is a fault in parents to withhold from their children, that which is meet, and put them into temptation to wish them in their graves, yet even that will by no means excuse the wickedness of those children that steal from their parents, and think all their own they can get from them by never so indirect methods. (2.) The mother curseth the son, or whoever had taken her money. It should seem she suspected her son, for when she cursed, she spoke in his ears so loud, and with so much passion and vehemence, as made both his ears to tingle. See what mischief the love of money

money makes; how it destroys the duty and comfort of every relation. It was the love of money that made Micah so undutiful to his mother as to rob her; and made her so unkind and void of natural affection to her son, as to curse him if he had it and concealed it. Outward losses drive good people to their prayers; but bad people to their curses. This woman's silver was her god, before it was made either into a graven or a molten image, else the loss of it would not have put her into such a passion, as quite to forget and break through all the laws of decency and piety. It is a very foolish thing for those that are provoked to throw their curses about, as a madman that casteth firebrands, arrows and death, since they know not, but they may light upon those that are most dear to them.

2. Micah and his mother reconciled. (1.) The son was so terrified with his mother's curses, that he restored the money. Though he had so little grace as to take it, he had so much left as not to dare to keep it, when his mother had sent a curse after it. He cannot believe his mother's money would do him any good, without his mother's blessing, nor dare he deny the theft when he is charged with it, nor retain the money when it is demanded by the right owner. It is best not to do evil, but it is next best when it is done, to undo it again, by repentance, confession, and restitution. Let children be afraid of having the prayers of their parents against them; for though the curse causeless shall not come; yet that which is justly deserved may be justly feared, even though it was passionately and indecently uttered. (2.) The mother was so well pleased with her son's repentance, that she recalled her curses, and turned them into prayers for her son's welfare; *Blessed be thou of the Lord, my son*. When those that have been guilty of a fault, appear to be free and ingenuous in owning it, they ought to be commended for their repentance, rather than still be condemned and run upon for their fault.

3. Micah and his mother agreeing to turn the money into a god, and set up idolatry in their family, and this seems to have been the first instance of the revolt of any Israelite from God and his instituted worship, after the death of Joshua, and the elders that outlived him, and is therefore thus particularly related. And though this was only the worship of the true God by an image, against the second commandment, yet this opened the door to the worship of other gods, Baalim and the groves, against the first and great commandment. Observe,

1. The mother's contrivance of this matter. When the silver was restored she pretends she had dedicated it to the Lord, ver. 3. either before it was stolen, and then she would have that thought to be the reason why she was so much grieved at the loss of it, and imprecated evil on him that had taken it; because it was a dedicated and therefore an accursed thing. Or after it was stolen, she had made a vow, that if she could retrieve it, she would dedicate it to God, and then she would have the providence that had so far favoured her as to bring it back to her hands, to be an owning of her vow. Come, saith she to her son, the money is mine, but thou hast a mind to it, let it be neither mine nor thine, but let us both agree to make it into an image for a religious use. Had she put it to a use that had been indeed for the service and honour of God, it had been a good way of accommodating the matter between them, but as it was, the project was wicked. Probably, this old woman was one of those that came out of Egypt, and would have such images made as she had seen there; now she began to dote, she called to remembrance the follies of her youth, and perhaps told her son, that this way of worshipping God by images was, to her knowledge, the old religion.

2. The son's compliance with her. It should seem when she first proposed the thing he stumbled at it, knowing what the second commandment was, for when she said, ver. 3. she designed it for her son to make an image of, yet he restored it to his mother (being loth to have a hand in making, the image) and she gave it the founder and had the thing done, blaming him perhaps for scrupling it, ver. 4. But when the images were made, Micah, by his mother's persuasion, was not only well reconciled to them, but hugely pleased and in love with them, so strangely bewitching was idolatry, and much supported by traditions received from their parents, 1 Pet. i. 18. Jer. xiv. 17. But observe how the old woman's covetousness prevailed in part above her superstition; she had wholly dedicated the silver to make the graven and molten image, ver. 3. all the eleven hundred pieces, but when it came to be done, she made less than a fifth part serve, even two hundred shekels, ver. 4. She thought that enough, and indeed it was too much to give for an image that is a teacher of lies. Had it been devoted truly to the honour of God, he would not thus have been put off with part of the price, but would have signified his resentment of the affront, as he did in the case of Ananias and Sapphira.

Now observe, 1. What was the corruption here introduced, ver. 5. The man Micah had a house of gods, a house of God, so the LXX. for so he thought it, as good as that at Shiloh, and better because his own, of his own inventing, and at his own dispose, for people love to have religion under their girdle, to manage it as they please. A house of error, so the Chaldee, for really it was so, a deviation from the way of truth, and an inlet to all deceit. Idolatry is a great cheat, and one of the worst of errors. That which he aimed at in the progress of his idolatry, whether he designed it at first or no, was to mimic and rival both God's oracles and his ordinances. (1.) His oracles. For he made *Teraphim*, little images which he might advise with as there was occasion, and receive informations, directions and predictions from. What the *Urim* and *Thummim* were to the prince and people, these *Teraphim* should be to his family; yet he could not think that the true God should own them, or give answers by them, and therefore depended upon such summons as the heathen worshipped, to inspire them, and make them serviceable to him. Thus while the honour of Jehovah was pretended, ver. 3. yet his institution being relinquished, they unavoidably lapsed into down-right idolatry and demon-worship. (2.) His ordinances. Some room or apartment in the house of Micah was appointed for the temple or house of God, an ephod or holy garment was provided for his priest to officiate in, in imitation of those used at the tabernacle of God; and one of his sons he consecrated, probably the eldest, to be his priest. And when he had set up a graven or molten image to represent the object of his worship, no marvel if a priest of his own getting and his own making, served to be the manager of it. Here is no mention of any altar, sacrifice, or incense, in honour of these silver gods, but having a priest, it is likely he had all these; unless we suppose, that at first his gods were intended only to be advised with, not to be adored like Laban's *Teraphim*; but the beginning of idolatry, as of other sins, is like the letting forth of water. Break the dam and you bring a deluge. Here idolatry began, and it spread like a fretting leprosy. Dr. Lightfoot would have us observe, that as eleven hundred pieces of silver were here devoted to the making of an idol, which ruined religion, especially in the tribe of Dan (as we shall find after) which was Samson's tribe, so eleven hundred pieces of silver was given by each Philistine lord for the ruin of Samson.

2. What was the cause of this corruption, ver. 6. *there was no king in Israel*, no judge or sovereign prince to take cognizance of the setting up of these images, which doubtless the country about soon resorted to, and to give orders for the destroying of them: none to convince Micah of his error, and to restrain and punish them; to take this disease in time, in which

the spreading of the infection might have been happily prevented. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes, and then they soon did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. When they were without a king to keep good order among them, God's house was forsaken, his priests neglected, and all went to ruin among them. See what a mercy government is, and what reason there is, that not only prayers and intercessions, but giving of thanks, should be made for kings and all in authority, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. Nothing contributes more, under God, to the support of religion in the world, than the due administration of those two great ordinances of magistracy and ministry.

7. ¶ And there was a young man out of Bethlehem-judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there. 8. And the man departed out of the city from Beth-lehem-judah, to sojourn where he could find a place: and he came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, as he journeyed. 9. And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehem-judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place. 10. And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in. 11. And the Levite was content to dwell with the man, and the young man was unto him as one of his sons. 12. And Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. 13. Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.

We have here an account of Micah's furnishing himself with a Levite for his chaplain, either thinking his son, because the heir of his estate, too good to officiate, or rather, because not of God's tribe, nor good enough.

Observe, 1. What brought this Levite to Micah. By his mother's side he was of the family of Judah, and lived at Beth-lehem among his mother's relations, for that was no Levites' city, or upon some other account, as a stranger or inmate, sojourned there, ver. 7. Thence he went to sojourn where he could find a place, and in his travels came to the house of Micah in mount Ephraim, ver. 8. Now (1.) Some think it was his unhappiness that he was under a necessity of removing, either because he was persecuted and abused, or rather neglected and starved, at Beth-lehem. God had made plentiful provision for the Levites, but the people withheld their dues, and did not help them into the possession of the cities assigned them, so that they were reduced to straits, and no care was taken for their relief. Israel's forsaking of God begun with forsaking the Levites, which therefore they are warned against, Deut. xii. 19. It is a sign religion is going to decay, when good ministers are neglected and at a loss for a livelihood. But, (2.) It seems rather to have been his fault and folly that he loved to wander, threw himself out where he was, and forfeited the respects of his friends, and having a roving head, would go to seek his fortune, as we say. We cannot conceive that things were yet come to that ill pass among them, that a Levite should be poor, unless it was his own fault. As those are fit to be pitied that would fix but may not, so those are fit to be punished that might fix but will not. Unsettledness being, one would think, a constant uneasiness, it is strange that any Israelite, especially any Levite, should affect it.

2. What bargain Micah made with him. Had he not been well enough content with his son for his priest, he would have gone or sent abroad to inquire out a Levite, but now he only takes hold of one that drops into his hands, which shewed that he had no great zeal in the matter. Is it probable, this rambling Levite heard in the country of Micah's house of gods, his graven and molten image, which if he had any thing of the spirit of a Levite in him, should have brought him thither to reprove Micah for his idolatry, to tell how directly contrary it was to the law of God, and how it would bring the judgments of God upon him; but instead of that, like a base and degenerate branch of that sacred tribe, thither he goes to offer his service, with, have you any work for a Levite? for I am out of business, and go to sojourn where I may find a place; all he aimed at was to get bread, not to do good, ver. 9. Micah courts him into his family, ver. 10. and promiseth him, (1.) Good preferment, he unto me a father, and a priest; Though a young man, and taken up at the door, yet if he take him for a priest, he will respect him as a father, so far from setting him among his servants. He asks not for his credentials, takes no time to inquire how he carried himself in the place of his last settlement, considers not whether, though he were a Levite, yet he might not be of such an ill character, as to be a plague and scandal to his family, but thinks, though he were never so great a rake, he might serve for a priest to a graven image, like Jeroboam's priests of the lowest of the people, 1 Kings xii. 31. They that can make any thing serve for a god, no marvel if they make any thing serve for a priest. (2.) A tolerable maintenance. He will allow him meat, and drink, and clothes, a double suit, so the word is in the margin, a better and a worse, one for every day's wear, and one for holy days, and ten shekels, about twenty-five shillings a year for spending money, a poor salary, in comparison of what God provided for the Levites that carried themselves well: but those that forsake God's service will never mend themselves, nor find a better master. The ministry is the best calling, but the worst trade in the world.

3. The Levite's settlement with him, ver. 11. He was content to dwell with the man, though his work was superstitious, and his wages scandalous, he objected against neither; but thought himself happy that he had light or so good an house. Micah thinking himself holier than any of his neighbours, presumes to consecrate this Levite, ver. 12. As if his building, furnishing, and endowing this chapel, authorized him, not only to appoint the person that should officiate there, but to confer those orders upon him which he had no right to give, nor the other to receive. And now he shews him respects as a father, and tenderness as a son, and with that is willing to make up the deficiency of the coin he gave him.

4. Micah's satisfaction of this, ver. 13. Now I know that the Lord will do me good, i. e. he hoped that his new establishment would gain reputation among his neighbours, and that would turn to his advantage, for he would share in the profits of his altar, or rather, that God would countenance and bless him in all he put his hand unto, because I have a Levite to be my priest. 1. He thought it was a sign of God's favour to him and his images, that he had so opportunely sent a Levite to his door. Thus they who please themselves with their own delusions, if providence unexpectedly brings any thing to their hands that furthers them in their evil way, are too apt from thence to

to infer that God is pleased with them. 2. He thought now the error of his priesthood was amended, all was well, though he still retained his graven and molten image. Note, Many deceive themselves into a good opinion of their state, by a partial reformation. They think they are as good as they should be, because in some one particular instance they are not so bad as they have been, as if the correcting of one fault would atone for persisting in all the rest. 3. He thought the making of a Levite into a priest was a very meritorious act, which really was a presumptuous usurpation, and very provoking to God. Men's pride, and ignorance, and self flattery, will undertake, not only to justify, but magnify and sanctify, the most daring impieties and invasions upon the divine prerogatives. With much reason might Micah have said, Now may I fear that God will curse me, because I have debauched one of his own tribe, and drawn him into the worship of a graven image; yet for this he hopes God will do him good. 4. He thought that having a Levite in the house with him, would of course intitle him to the divine favour. Carnal hearts are apt to build too much upon their external privileges, and to conclude, that God will certainly do them good, because they are born of godly parents, dwell in praying families, are linked in society with those that are very good, and sit under a lively ministry; whereas all this is but like having a Levite to be their priest, which amounts to no security at all that God will do them good, unless they be good themselves and make a good use of these advantages.

C H A P. XVIII.

How idolatry crept into the family of Micah we read in the chapter before, how it was translated from thence into the tribe of Dan we have an account in this chapter, and how it gained a settlement in a city of note; for how great a matter doth a little fire kindle! The tribe of Dan had their lot assigned them last of all the tribes, and it happening to be too strait for them, a considerable city in the utmost corner of Canaan northward was added to it, let them get it and take it: it was Laish and Lechem, Josh. xix. 47. Note here we are told. (1.) How they sent spies to bring them an account of the place, who by the way got acquainted with Micah's priest, ver. 1—6. (2.) What an encouraging report these spies brought back, ver. 7—10. (3.) What force were sent to conquer Laish, ver. 11—13. (4.) How they by the way plundered Micah of his gods, ver. 14—20. (5.) How easily they conquered Laish, ver. 21—29. and when they had it, set up the graven image in it, ver. 30, 31.

1. **I**N those days there was no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in: for unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel. 2. And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there. 3. When they were by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this place? and what hast thou here? 4. And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest. 5. And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous. 6. And the priest said unto them, Go in peace; before the LORD is your way wherein ye go.

Here is, 1. The eye which these Danites had upon Laish, not the whole tribe of Dan, but one family of them, to whose lot, in the subdivision of Canaan, that city fell. Hitherto this family had sojourned with their brethren, who had taken possession of their lot, which lay entire between Judah and the Philistines, and had declined going to their own city, because there was no king in Israel to over-rule them, ver. 1. It lay a great way off, separate from the rest of the tribe, it was entire in the enemy's hand, and therefore they would sponge upon their brethren, rather than go far to provide for themselves. But at length necessity forced them to it, and they began to think of an inheritance to dwell in. It is better to have a little one's own, than always to hang upon others.

2. The enquiry which this family of the Danites made concerning Laish. They sent five men to search the land, ver. 2. that they might know the character of the country, whether it were an inheritance worth going so far for, and the posture of the people, whether the making of themselves masters of it was a thing practicable; what force was necessary in order thereunto, and which was the best way of making an attack upon it. The men they sent were men of valour, that if they fell into their enemies hands, knew how to look danger in the face. It is prudent to look before we leap: Dan had the subtilty of a serpent by the way, Gen. xlix. 17. as well as the courage of a lion's whelp, leaping from Bashan, Deut. xxxiii. 22.

3. The acquaintance which their spies got with Micah's priest, and the improvement they made of that acquaintance. It seems they had known this Levite formerly, he having in his rambles been sometimes in their country, and though his countenance might be altered, they knew him again by his voice, ver. 3. They were surprised to find him so far off, enquired what brought him thither, and he told them, ver. 4. what business he had there, and what encouragement. They understanding that he had an oracle in his custody, desired he would tell them whether they would prosper in their present undertaking, ver. 5. See their carelessness and regardlessness of God and his providence, they would not have enquired of the Lord at all, if this Levite's mentioning the Teraphim he had with him had not put it into their heads. Many never think of religion, but just when it falls in their way, and they cannot avoid it, like chance-customers. See their ignorance of the divine law, that they thought God, who had forbidden the religious use of graven images, would yet own them in consulting an image, and give them an answer of peace, should he be enquired of by them? Ezek. xiv. 3. They seem to have had a greater opinion of Micah's Teraphim, than of God's Urim, for they had passed by Shiloh, and, for ought appears, had not enquired there of God's high-priest, but Micah's shabby Levite

shall be an oracle to them. He betakes himself to his usual method of consulting his Teraphim, and whether he himself believed it or no, he humoured the thing so well, that he made them believe he had an answer from God, encouraging them to go on, and assuring them of good success, ver. 6. Go in peace, you shall be safe, and may be easy, for before the LORD is your way, i. e. he approves it, as the Lord is said to know the way of the righteous with acceptance, and therefore he will make it prosperous, his eye will be upon you for good, he will direct your way, and preserve your going out and coming in. Note, Our great care should be, that our way be such as God approves; and if it be so, we may go in peace. If God care for us, on him let us cast our care, and be satisfied that we cannot miss our way, if he go before us.

7. ¶ Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure, and there was no magistrate in the land that might put them to shame in any thing, and they were far from the Zidonians, and had no business with any man. 8. And they came unto their brethren to Zorah, and Eshtaol; and their brethren said unto them, What say ye? 9. And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and behold, it is very good: and are ye still? be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess the land. 10. When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands: a place where there is no want of any thing that is in the earth. 11. ¶ And there went from thence of the family of the Danites out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men, appointed with weapons of war. 12. And they went up, and pitched in Kirjath-jearim in Judah: wherefore they called that place Mehaneh-dan unto this day: behold, it is behind Kirjath-jearim. 13. And they passed thence unto mount Ephraim, and came unto the house of Micah.

Here is, 1. The observation which the spies made upon the city of Laish, and the posture of its inhabitants, ver. 7. Never was place so ill governed, and so ill guarded, which would make it a very easy prey to the invader. (1.) It was ill governed, for every man might be as bad as he would, and there was no magistrate, no heir of restraint, so the word is, that might so much as put them to shame in any thing, much less put them to death; so that by the most impudent immoralities they provoked God's wrath, and by all manner of mutual mischiefs, weakened and consumed one another. See here, 1. What the office of magistrates is, they are to be heirs of restraint i. e. to preserve a constant entail of power, as heirs to an inheritance, in the places where they are, for the restraining of that which is evil. They are possessors of restraint, entrusted with their authority for this end, that they may check and suppress every thing that is vicious, and be a terror to evil doers. It is only God's grace that can renew men's ill minds, and turn their hearts, but the magistrates power may restrain their ill practices, and tie their hands, so that the wickedness of the wicked may not be either so injurious, or so infectious, as otherwise it would be. Though the sword of justice cannot cut up the root of bitterness, it may cut off its branches, and hinder its growth and spreading; that vice may not go without a check, for then it becomes daring and dangerous, and the community shares in the guilt. 2. See what method must be used for the restraint of wickedness; Sinners must be put to shame, that they who will not be restrained by the shamefulness of the sin before God and their own consciences, may be restrained by the shamefulness of the punishment before men. All ways must be tried to dash sin out of countenance, and put it in an ill name, to make people ashamed of their idleness, drunkenness, cheating, lying, and other sins, by making reputation always appear on virtue's side. 3. See how miserable and how near to ruin those places are, that either have no magistrates, or none that bear the sword to any purpose; the wicked then walk on every side, Psal. xii. 8. And how happy we are in good laws, and a good government. (2.) It was ill guarded. The people of Laish dwelt careless, quiet, and secure, their gates left open, their walls out of repair, because no apprehension of danger any way; though their wickedness was so great, that they had reason to fear divine vengeance every day. It was a sign the Israelites, through their sloth and cowardice, were not now such a terror to the Canaanites, as they had been when they first came among them, else the city of Laish, which probably knew itself to be assigned to them, would not have been so very secure. Though they were an open and inland town, they lived secure, like the Zidonians, who were surrounded with the sea, and were well fortified both by art and nature; but were far from the Zidonians, who therefore could not come in to their assistance, nor help to defend them from the danger, which by debauching their manners they had helped to bring them into. And lastly, They had no business with any man, which speaks either the idleness they affected, they followed no trade, and so grew lazy and luxurious, and utterly unable to defend themselves. Or the independency they affected, they scorned to be either in subjection to, or alliance with any of their neighbours, and so they had none to protect them, or bring in any aid to them. They cared for no body, and therefore no body cared for them. Such as these were the men of Laish.

2. The encouragement which from hence they gave their countrymen that lent them, to prosecute their design upon this city, ver. 8, 9, 10. Probably, the Danites had formed notions of the insuperable difficulties of the enterprise, thought it impossible ever to make themselves masters of Laish, and therefore had kept themselves so long out of the possession of it, perhaps suggesting likewise to one another in their unbelief, that it was not a country worth going so far, and running such a risque for. Which jealousies the spies, (and they were not in this evil spies) had an eye to in their report. (1.) They represent the place as desirable. If you will trust our judgments, ye have seen the land, and we are agreed in our verdict upon the view, that behold it is very good, ver. 9. better than this mountainous country; into which we are here crowded by the Philistines. You need not doubt of living comfortably in it, for it is a place where there is no want of any thing, ver. 10. See what a good land Canaan was, that this city which lay furthest of all northward, in the utmost corner of the country, stood on such a fruitful spot. (2.) They represent it as attainable: they do not at all question but, with God's blessing, they may soon get possession of it; for the people are secure, ver. 10. And the more secure, always the less safe; God has given it into your hands, and you may have it for the taking. They

stir them up to the undertaking. *Arise, that we may go up against them*, let us go about it speedily and resolutely: Expostulate with them for their delays, and chide them out of their sluggishness; *Are ye still? be ye not slothful to go*. Men need to be thus stirred up to mind even their interest. Heaven is a very good land, where there is no want of any thing; our God has by the promise, given it into our hands, let us not be slothful then in making it sure, and laying hold on eternal life, but strive to enter.

3. The Danites expedition against Laish. This particular family of them, to whose lot that city fell, now at length make towards it, ver. 11, 12, 13. The military men were but six hundred in all, not a hundredth part of that tribe, for when they entered Canaan, the Danites were above sixty-four thousand, Numb. xxvii. 43. It was strange that none of their brethren of their own tribe, much less of any other, came in to their assistance; that it was long after Israel came to Canaan, before there appeared among them any thing of a public spirit, or concern for common interest, which was the reason they seldom united in a common head, and that kept them low and inconsiderable. It appears, by ver. 21. that these six hundred were the whole number that went to plant there, for they had their families and effects with them, their little ones, and cattle, so confident were they of success. The other tribes gave them a free passage through their country; their first day's march brought them near Kirjath-jearim, ver. 12. and such rare things were military encampments now become in Israel, that the place where they rested that night was from thence called Mahaneh-dan, the camp of Dan, and probably the place whence they began their march between Zorah and Eshtaol, was called by the same name, and is meant, chap. xiii. 25. The second day's march brought them into mount Ephraim, near Micah's house, ver. 13. and there we must pause a while.

14. ¶ Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? Now therefore consider what ye have to do. 15. And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, even unto the house of Micah, and saluted him. 16. And the six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which were of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate. 17. And the five men that went to spy out the land, went up, and came in thither, and took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men that were appointed with weapons of war. 18. And these went into Micah's house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: then said the priest unto them, What do ye? 19. And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel? 20. And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people. 21. So they turned and departed, and put the little ones, and the cattle, and the carriage before them. 22. ¶ And when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that were in the houses near to Micah's house, were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan. 23. And they cried unto the children of Dan: and they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company? 24. And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what is this that ye said unto me, What aileth thee? 25. And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household. 26. And the children of Dan went their way; and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house.

The Danites had sent out their spies to find out a country for them, and they sped well in their search; but here now they came to the place (for till that brought it to their mind, it doth not appear that they had mentioned it to their brethren) they oblige them with a further discovery; they can tell them where there are gods, here in these houses, there is an ephod and teraphim, and a great many fine things for devotion, such as we have not the like in our country, now therefore consider what ye have to do, ver. 14. We consulted them, and had a good answer from them; they are worth having; nay, they are worth stealing (that is having upon the worst terms) and if we can but make ourselves masters of these gods, we may the better hope to prosper, and make ourselves masters of Laish. So far they were in the right, that it was desirable to have God's presence with them, but wretchedly mistaken, when they took these images for tokens of God's presence, which were fitter to be used in a puppet-play, than in acts of devotion. They thought an oracle would be a pretty companion for them in their enterprise, and instead of a council of war to advise upon every emergency; and the place they were going to settle in, being so far from Shiloh, they thought they had more need of a house of gods among themselves, than Micah had that lived so near it. They might have made as good an ephod and teraphim themselves as this was, and which would have served their purpose every whit as well, but the reputation which they found this in the possession of (though it had that reputation but a while) amazed them into a mighty value and veneration for it, which they would soon have dropped, if they had had so much sense as to enquire into its original, and whether there were any thing divine in its institution.

No. XXXIX.

Being determined to take these gods along with them, we are told how they stole the images, cajoled the priest, and frightened Micah from attempting to rescue them.

1. The five men that knew the house, and the avenues to it, and particularly the chapel, went in and fetched out the images, with the ephod, and teraphim, and all the appurtenances, while the six hundred men kept the priest in talk at the gate, ver. 16, 17, 18. See what little care this sorry priest took of his gods, while he was sauntering at the gate, and gazing at the strangers, his treasure (such as it was) was gone. See how impotent these sorry gods were that could not help themselves from being stolen; it is mentioned as the reproach of idols, that *themselves are gone into captivity*, Isa. xlvi. 2. O the sottishness of these Danites! How could they imagine those gods should protect them, that could not keep themselves from being stolen? Yet because they went by the name of gods, as if it were not enough that they had with them the presence of the invisible God, nor that they stood in relation to the tabernacle, where there were even visible tokens of his presence, nothing will serve them but they must have gods to go before them, not of their own making indeed, but, which was as bad, of their own stealing. Their idolatry began in theft, a proper prologue for such an opera. In order to the breaking of the second commandment, they begin with the eighth, and take their neighbours' goods to make them their gods. The holy God hates robbery for burnt-offerings, but the devil loves it. Had these Danites seized the images to deface them, and abolish them, and the priest, to punish him, they had done like Israelites indeed, and had appeared jealous of their God, as their fathers had done, Josh. xxii. 16. but to take them for their own use, was such a complicated crime, as shewed they neither feared God, nor regarded man, but were perfectly lost both to godliness and honesty.

2. They set upon the priest, and flattered him into a good humour, not only to let the gods go, but to go himself along with them; for without him they knew not well how to make use of the gods. Observe, 1. How they tempted him, ver. 19. They assured him of better preferment with them than what he now had. It would be more honour and profit to be chaplain to a regiment, (for they were no more, though they call themselves a tribe) than to be only a domestic chaplain to a private gentleman. Let him go with them, and he shall have more dependants on him, more sacrifices brought to his altar, and more fees for consulting his teraphim than he had here. 2. How they won him. A little persuasion served, *his heart was glad*, ver. 20. The proposal took well enough with his rambling fancy, which would never let him stay long at a place, and gratified his covetousness and ambition. He had no reason to say, but that he was well where he was, Micah had not deceived him, or changed his wages, he was not moved with any remorse of conscience for attending on a graven image; had he gone away to Shiloh to minister to the Lord's priests, according to the duty of a Levite, he might have been welcome there, (Deut. xviii. 6.) and his remove had been commendable, but instead of that he takes the image with him, and carries the infection of the idolatry into a whole city. It had been very unjust and ungrateful to Micah, if he had only gone away himself, but much more so to take the images along with him, which he knew the heart of Micah was set upon. Yet better could not be expected from a treacherous Levite; what house can be sure of him who hath forsaken the house of the Lord? Or what friend will he be true to, that has been false to his God? He could not pretend that he was under a force, for he was glad in his heart to go. If ten shekels won him (as bishop Hall expresseth it) eleven would lose him; for what can hold those that have made shipwreck of good conscience? *The hireling flees because he is a hireling*. The priest and his gods went into the midst of the people, there they placed him, that they might secure him, either from going back himself, if his mind should change, or from being fetched back by Micah; or perhaps in imitation of the order of Israel's march through the wilderness, in which the ark and the priests went in the midst of their camp.

3. They frightened Micah back, when he pursued them to recover his gods. As soon as ever he perceived that his chapel was plundered, and his chaplain had out-run him, he mustered all the forces he could make, and pursued the robbers, ver. 22. His neighbours, and perhaps tenants that used to join with him in his devotions, were forward to help him on this occasion; they got together and pursued the robbers, who having their children and cattle before them, ver. 21. could make no great haste, so that they soon overtook them, hoping by strength of reason to recover what was stolen, for the disproportion of their numbers was such, that they could not hope to do it by strength of arms. The pursuers called after them, desiring to speak a word with them, they in the rear (where it is probable they posted the fiercest and strongest of their company, expecting there to be attacked) turned about, and asked Micah what ailed him to be so much concerned, and what he would have? ver. 23. He argues with them, and pleads his right, which he thought should prevail, but they in answer plead their might, which it proved did prevail; for it is common that might overcomes right.

1. He insists upon the wrongs they had certainly done him, ver. 24. *Ye have taken away my gods*, my images of God, which I have such an incontestible title to, for I made them myself, and which I have such an affection for, that I am undone if I lose them, for what have I more that will do me any good if these be gone? Now, (1.) This discovers to us the folly of idolaters, and the power that Satan has over them. What a folly was it for him to call those his gods which he had made, when he only is to be worshipped by us as a God that made us; folly indeed to set his heart upon such silly idle things, and to look upon himself as undone when he had lost them. (2.) This may discover to us our spiritual idolatry, that creature which we place our happiness in, which we set our affections inordinately upon, and which we can by no means find in our hearts to part with, of which we say, what have we more? That we make an idol of. That is put in God's place, and is an usurper which we are concerned about, as if our life and comfort, our hope and happiness, and all were bound up in it. But, (3.) If all people will thus walk in the name of their God, shall we not be in like manner affected towards our God, the true God? Let us reckon the having an interest in God, and communion with him, incomparably the richest having; and the loss of God the forest loss; woe unto us if he depart, for what have we more; deserted souls that are lamenting after the Lord, may well admire, as Micah did, you should ask, what ails them? For the tokens of God's favour are suspended, his comforts are withdrawn, and what have they more?

2. They insist upon the mischief they would certainly do him, if he prosecuted his demand. They would not hear reason, nor do justice, nor would so much as offer to pay him the prime cost he had been at upon those images, nor promise to make restitution of what they had taken, when they had served their present purpose with them in this expedition, and had time to copy them, and make others like them for themselves, much less had they any compassion for a loss he so bitterly lamented, they would not so much as speak him fair, or give him good words, but resolve to justify their robbery with murder, if he did not immediately let fall his claims, ver. 25. Take heed, *lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life*, and that is

worse than losing thy gods. Wicked and unreasonable men reckon it a great provocation to be asked to do justice, and support themselves by their power against right and reason. Micah's crime is atking his own, yet for this he is in danger to lose his life, and the lives of his household. Micah has not courage enough to venture his life for the rescue of his gods, so little opinion had he of their being able to protect him and bear him out, and therefore tamely gives them up, ver. 26. *He turned and went back to his house:* and if the loss of his idols did not convince him (as one would think it should) of their vanity and impotency, and his own folly in setting his heart upon them, and send him back to the true God from whence he had revolted; he that lost them had much better bargain than they that by force of arms carried them off. If the loss of our idols cure us of the love of them, and make us say, *what have we to do any more with idols?* The loss will be unspeakable gain, see *1 Ju. ii. 20.—xxx. 22.*

27. And they took *the things* which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people *that were* at quiet, and secure; and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire. 28. And *there was* no deliverer, because it *was* far from Zidon, and they had no business with *any* man, and it *was* in the valley that *lieth* by Beth-rehob: and they built a city, and dwelt therein. 29. And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit, the name of the city *was* Laish at the first. 30. ¶ And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan, until the day of the captivity of the land. 31. And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.

Here is, 1. Laish conquered by the Danites. They proceeded on their march, and because they met with no disaster, perhaps concluded they had done no ill in robbing Micah; many justify themselves in their impiety by their prosperity. Observe, 1. What posture they found the people of Laish in, both those of the city and those of the country about; they were quiet and secure, not jealous of the five spies that had been among them to search out the land, nor had they any intelligence of the approach of this enemy, which made them a very easy prey to this little handful of men that came upon them, ver. 27. Note, Many are brought to destruction by their security. Satan gets advantage against us when we are careless, and off our watch; happy therefore is the man that feareth always. 2. What a complete victory they obtained over them, they put all the people to the sword, and burnt down so much of the city as they thought fit to rebuild, ver. 27, 28. and for aught appears herein, they met with no resistance; for the measure of the iniquity of the Canaanites was full, that of the Danites was but beginning to fill. (3.) How the conquerors settled themselves in their room, ver. 28, 29. They built the city, or so much of it anew, the old buildings being gone to decay, and called the name of it Dan, to be a witness for them that they were Danites by birth, though separated so far off from their brethren, which hereafter, by reason of their distance, might be called in question. We are concerned not to lose the privilege of our relation to God's Israel, and therefore must take all occasions to own it, and preserve the remembrance of it to ours after us.

2. Idolatry immediately set up there. God had graciously performed his promise, in putting them in possession of that which fell to their lot, obliging them thereby to be faithful to him, who had been so to them, they inherited the labour of the people, that they might observe his statutes, *Psal. cv. 44, 45.* But the first thing they do after they are settled, is to break his statutes; as soon as they began to settle themselves, they set up the graven image, ver. 30. perversely attributing their success to that idol, which, if God had not been infinitely patient, would have been their ruin. Thus a prosperous idolater goes on to offend, *imputing this his power unto his god, Hab. i. 11.* Their Levite, who officiated as priest, is at length named here, Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh. The word Manasseh, in the original, has the letter Nun set over the head, which some of the Jewish rabbins say, is an intimation that it should be left out, and then Manasseh will be Moses, and this Levite, they say, was grandson to the famous Moses, who indeed had a son, named Gershom: but that the historian, in honour of Moses, by a half interpolation of that letter, turned the name into Manasseh. The vulgar Latin reads it Moses. And indeed Moses had a grandson that was rakish, and was picked up as a fit tool to be made use of in the setting up of idolatry, it is not the only instance (would to God it were) of the unhappy degenerating of the posterity of great and good men. Children's children are not always the crown of old men. But the learned Bishop Patrick takes this to be an idle conceit of the rabbins, and supposeth this Jonathan to be of some other family of the Levites. How long these corruptions continued, we are told in the close. (1.) That the posterity of this Jonathan continued to act as priests to this family of Dan, that was seated at Laish, and in the country about, till the captivity, ver. 30. After Micah's image was removed, that family retained the character of priests, and had respect paid them as such by that city, and it is very probable Jeroboam had an eye to them, when he set up one of his calves there, which they would welcome at Dan, and put some reputation upon, when the priests of the Lord would have nothing to do with them, and that his family officiated as some of his priests. (2.) That these images continued till Samuel's time, for so long the ark of God was at Shiloh, and it is probable, in his time effectual care was taken to suppress and abolish this idolatry. See how dangerous it is to admit an infection, for spiritual distempers are not so soon cured as caught.

C H A P. XIX.

The three remaining chapters of this book contain a most tragical story of the wickedness of the men of Gibeah, patronized by the tribe of Benjamin, for which that tribe was severely chastised, and almost intirely cut off by the rest of the tribes. This seems to have been done not long after the death of Joshua, for it was when there was no king, no judge in Israel, ver. 1. and chap. xxi. 25. and Phinehas was then high priest, chap. xx. 28. These particular iniquities, the Danites' idolatry, and the Benjamites' immorality, let in that general apostasy, Judg. iii. 7. The abuse of the Levite's concubine is here very particularly related, (1.)

Her adulterous elopement from him, ver. 1, 2. (2.) His reconciliation to her, and the journey he took to fetch her home, ver. 3. (3.) Her father's kind entertainment of him, ver. 4—9. (4.) The abuses he met with at Gibeah, where, being benighted, he was forced to take up. 1. He was neglected by the men of Gibeah, ver. 10—15. and entertained by an Ephraimite that sojourned among them, ver. 16—21. 2. They set upon him in his quarters; as the Sodomites did on Lot's guests, ver. 22—24. 3. They villanously forced his concubine to death, ver. 25—28. (5.) The course he took to send notice of this to all the tribes of Israel, ver. 29, 30.

1. **A**ND it came to pass in those days, when there *was* no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of mount Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Beth-lehem-judah. 2. And his concubine played the whore against him, and went away from him unto her father's house to Beth-lehem-judah, and was there four whole months. 3. And her husband arose and went after her to speak friendly unto her, and to bring her again, having his servant with him, and a couple of asses: and he brought him into her father's house, and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him. 4. And his father-in-law, the damsel's father, retained him, and he abode with him three days: so they did eat and drink, and lodged there. 5. And it came to pass on the fourth day, when they arose early in the morning, that he rose up to depart: and the damsel's father said unto his son-in-law, Comfort thine heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way. 6. And they sat down and did eat and drink both of them together: for the damsel's father had said unto the man, Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry. 7. And when the man rose up to depart, his father-in-law urged him: therefore he lodged there again. 8. And he arose early in the morning, on the fifth day to depart: and the damsel's father said, Comfort thine heart, I pray thee. And they tarried until afternoon, and they did eat both of them. 9. And when the man rose up to depart, he and his concubine, and his servant; his father-in-law, the damsel's father, said unto him, Behold, now the day draweth towards evening, I pray you tarry all night: behold, the day groweth to an end, lodge here, that thine heart may be merry: and to-morrow get you early on your way, that thou mayest go home. 10. But the man would not tarry that night, but he rose up and departed, and came over against Jebus (which is Jerusalem) and there were with him two asses saddled, his concubine also *was* with him. 11. And when they were by Jebus, the day was far spent, and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn in unto this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it. 12. And his master said unto him, We will not turn aside hither into the city of a stranger, that is not of the children of Israel: we will pass over to Gibeah. 13. And he said unto his servant, Come, and let us draw near to one of these places to lodge all night, in Gibeah, or in Ramah. 14. And they passed on, and went their way, and the sun went down upon them, when they were by Gibeah, which belongeth to Benjamin. 15. And they turned aside thither to go in and to lodge in Gibeah: and when he went in, he sat down in a street of the city: for there was no man that took them into his house to lodge in.

The domestic affairs of this Levite would not have been related thus largely, but to make way for the following story of the injuries done him, in which the whole nation interested themselves. Bishop Hall's first remark upon this story is, *that there is no complaint of a public ordered state, but there is a Levite at one end of it, either as an agent or as a patient.* In Micah's idolatry, a Levite was active; in the wickedness of Gibeah, a Levite was passive; *no tribe shall sooner feel the want of government than that of Levi:* and in all the book of Judges, no mention is made of any of that tribe, but of these two. This Levite was of mount Ephraim, ver. 1. He married a wife of Bethlehem-judah; she is called his concubine, because she was not endowed, for perhaps he had nothing to endow her with, being himself a sojourner, and not settled; but it doth not appear that he had any other wife, and the margin calls her a wife, a concubine, ver. 1. She came from the same city that Micah's Levite came from, as if Bethlehem-judah owed a double ill turn to mount Ephraim, for she was as bad for a Levite's wife, as that other for a Levite.

1. This Levite's concubine played the whore, and out-run her husband, ver. 2. The Chaldee reads it, only that she carried it insolently to him, or despised him, and he being displeased at it, she went away from him, and (which was not fair) she was received and entertained at her father's house. Had her husband turned her out of doors unjustly, her father ought to have pitied her affliction; but when she treacherously departed from her husband to embrace the bosom of a stranger, her father ought not to have countenanced her sin. Perhaps she would not have out-run her duty to her husband, if she had not known too well where she should be kindly received. Children's ruin is often owing very much to the parents' indulgence.

2. The Levite himself went to court her return. It was a sign there was no king, no judge in Israel, else she had been prosecuted and put to death.

as an adulteress; but instead of that, she is addressed in the best manner by her injured husband, who takes a long journey on purpose to beseech her to be reconciled, *ver. 3.* If he had put her away, it had been a crime in him to return to her again, *Jer. iii. 1.* But she having gone away, it was a virtue in him to forgive the offence; and, though the party wronged, yet to make the first motion to her to be friends again. It is part of the character of the wisdom from above, that it is gentle and easy to be intreated. He spake friendly to her, or comfortably, for so the Hebrew phrase of speaking to the heart commonly signifies; which intimates that she was in sorrow, penitent for what she had done amiss, which probably he heard of when he came to fetch her back. Thus God promiseth concerning adulterous Israel, *Hof. ii. 14. I will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her.*

3. Her father bid him very welcome, and by his extraordinary kindness to him, endeavoured to atone for the countenance he had given his daughter in withdrawing from him, and to confirm him in his disposition to be reconciled to her. (1.) He entertains him kindly. *Rejoiceth to see him, ver. 3.* treats him generously for three days, *ver. 4.* And the Levite, to shew that he was perfectly reconciled, accepted his kindness, and we don't find that he upbraided him or his daughter, with what had been amiss, but was as easy and pleasant, as at his first wedding-feast. It becomes all, but especially Levites, to forgive as God doth. Every thing among them gave a hopeful prospect of their living comfortably together for the future, but could they have foreseen what befel them within one day or two, how would all their mirth have been embittered and turned into mourning! When the affairs of our families are in the best posture, we ought to rejoice with trembling, because we know not what troubles one day may bring forth. We cannot foresee what evil is near us, but we ought to consider what may be, that we may not be secure, as if to-morrow must needs be as this day, and much more abundant, *Isa. lvi. 12.* (2.) He is very earnest for his stay, as a further demonstration of his hearty welcome, the affection he had for him, and the pleasure he took in his company, is out of a civil regard to him as his son-in-law, and an ingrafted branch of his own house. Note, There is love and duty owing to those we are by marriage related to, as well as those that are bone of our bone. And they that shew kindness as this Levite did, may expect as he did to receive kindness. And, 2. Out of a pious respect to him as a Levite, a servant of God's house; if he were such a Levite as he should be, (and nothing appears to the contrary) he is to be commended for courting his stay, finding his converse profitable, and having opportunity to learn from him the good knowledge of the Lord; hoping also that the Lord will do him good, because he has a Levite to be his son-in-law, and will bless him for his sake. 1. He forceth him to stay the fourth day, and that was kind, not knowing when they might be together again, he engageth him to stay as long as possibly he could. The Levite, though nobly treated, was very urgent to be gone; a good man's heart is where his business is, for as a bird that wanders from her nest, so is the man that wanders from his place. It is a sign a man has either little to do at home, or little heart to do what he has to do, that can take a pleasure in being long abroad where he has nothing to do. It is especially good to see a Levite willing to go home to his few sheep in the wilderness. Yet this Levite was overcome by importunity and kind management to stay longer than he intended, *ver. 5, 6, 7.* We ought to avoid the extreme of an over easy yielding to the neglect of our duty on the one hand, and that of moroseness and willfulness to the neglect of our friends and their kindness on the other hand. Our Saviour, after his resurrection, was prevailed upon to stay longer with his friends than he at first intimated his purpose, *Luke xxiv. 28, 29.* 2. He forceth him to stay till afternoon the fifth day, and that, as it proved, was unkind, *ver. 8, 9.* He would by no means let him go before dinner, promiseth him he shall have dinner early, designing thereby, as he had done the day before, to detain him another night; but the Levite designed for the house of the Lord at Shiloh, *ver. 18.* and was impatient to get thither, and therefore would stay no longer. Had they set out early, they might have reached to some better lodging-place than that which they were now constrained to take up with; nay, they might have got to Shiloh. Note, Our friends' designed kindnesses often prove in the event real injuries; what is meant for our welfare becomes a trap. *Who knows what is good for a man in this life?* The Levite was unwise in setting out so late; he might have got home better if he had staid a night longer, and taken the day before him.

4. In his return home he was forced to lodge at Gibeah, a city in the tribe of Benjamin, afterwards called Gibeah of Saul, which lay in this road towards Shiloh and mount Ephraim. When it drew towards night, and the shadows of the evening were stretched out, they began to think (as it concerns us to do when we observe the day of our life hastening towards a period) where we must lodge. When night came, they could not pursue their journey; he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goes; they could not but desire rest, for which the night was intended, as the day for labour. (1.) The servant proposed that they should lodge in Jebus, afterwards Jerusalem, but as yet in the possession of the Jebusites, come (saith the servant) let us lodge in this city of the Jebusites, *ver. 11.* And if they had done so, it is probable they had had much better usage than they met with in Gibeah of Benjamin. Debauched and profligate Israelites are worse, and much more dangerous than Canaanites themselves. But the master, as became one of God's tribe, would by no means quarter, no, not one night in a city of strangers, *ver. 12.* not because he questioned his safety among them, but he was not willing, if he could possibly avoid it, to have so much intimacy and familiarity with them as a night's lodging came to, nor to be so much beholden to them. By shunning this place he would witness against the wickedness of those that contracted friendship and familiarity with those devoted nations. Let Israelites, Levites especially, associate with Israelites, and not with the sons of the stranger. (2.) Having passed by Jebus, which was about five or six miles from Bethlehem, the place whence they came, and not having day-light to bring them to Ramah, they took up at Gibeah, *ver. 13, 14, 15.* there they sat down in the street, nobody offering them a lodging. In these countries at that time there were no inns, or public-houses, in which, as with us, travellers might have entertainment for their money, but they carried entertainment along with them, as this Levite did here, *ver. 19.* and depended upon the courtesy and hospitality of the inhabitants for a lodging. Let us take occasion from hence, when we are in journeys, to thank God for this, among other conveniences of travelling, that there are inns to entertain strangers, and in which they may be welcome, and well accommodated for their money. Surely there is no country in the world, wherein one may stay at home with more satisfaction, or go abroad with more comfort, than in our own nation. This traveller, though a Levite, (and to those of that tribe God had particularly commanded his people upon all occasions) met with very cold entertainment at Gibeah, no man took them into his house; if they had any reason to think he was a Levite, perhaps that made those ill people the more shy of him. There are those who will have this laid to their charge at the great day, *I was a stranger, and ye took me not in.*

16. ¶ And behold, there came an old man from his work out of the field at even, which was also of mount

Ephraim; and he sojourned in Gibeah, but the men of the place were Benjamites. 17. And when he had lifted up his eyes, he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city: and the old man said, Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou? 18. And he said unto him, We are passing from Beth-lehem-judah, toward the side of mount Ephraim, from thence am I; and I went to Beth-lehem-judah, but I am now going to the house of the LORD, and there is no man that receiveth me to house. 19. Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses: and there is bread and wine also for me and for thy handmaid, and for the young man which is with thy servants: there is no want of any thing. 20. And the old man said, Peace be with thee: howsoever, let all thy wants lie upon me, only lodge not in the street. 21. So he brought him into his house, and gave provender unto the asses: and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink.

Though there was none of Gibeah, yet it proved there was one in Gibeah that shewed some civility to this distressed Levite, who was glad that any one took notice of him. It was strange that some of those wicked people, that when it was dark designed to ill to him and his concubine, did not, under pretence of kindness, invite them in, that they might have a fairer opportunity of perpetrating their villany, but either they had not wit enough to be so designing, or not wickedness enough to be so deceiving: Or, perhaps, none of them separately thought of such a wickedness; till in the black and dark night they got together to contrive what mischief they should do. All people in confederacy make one another much worse than any of them would be by themselves. When the Levite, and his wife, and servant, were beginning to fear that they must lie in the street all night, (and as good have lain in a den of lions) they were at length invited into a house. And we are told,

1. Who that kind man was who invited them. (1.) He was a man of mount Ephraim, and only sojourned in Gibeah, *ver. 16.* Of all the tribes of Israel, the Benjamites had most reason to be kind to poor travellers, for their ancestor, Benjamin, was born upon the road, his mother then upon a journey, and very near to this place, *Gen. xxxv. 16, 17.* Yet they were hard-hearted to a traveller in distress, while an honest Ephraimite had compassion on him, and, no doubt, was the more kind to him, when upon enquiry he found that he was his countryman, of mount Ephraim likewise. He that was himself but a sojourner in Gibeah, was the more compassionate to a wayfaring man, for he knew the heart of a stranger, *Deut. x. 19.* Good people that look upon themselves but as strangers and sojourners in this world, should for this reason be tender one of another, because they all belong to the same better country, and are not at home here. (2.) He was an old man, one that retained some of the expiring virtue of an Israelite: the rising generation was entirely corrupted, if there were any good remaining among them, it was only with those that were old and going off. (3.) He was coming home from his work out of the field at even. The evening calls home labourers; *Psalm civ. 23.* But it should seem this was the only labourer that this evening brought home to Gibeah. The rest had given up themselves to sloth and luxury, and no marvel there was among them, as in Sodom, abundance of uncleanness, when there was among them, as in Sodom, abundance of idleness, *Ezek. xvi. 49.* But he that was honestly diligent in his business all day, was disposed to be generously hospitable to these poor strangers at night. Let men labour that they may have to give, *Eph. iv. 28.* It appears by *ver. 21.* that he was a man of some substance, and yet had been himself at work in the field. No man's estate will privilege him in idleness.

2. How free and generous he was in his invitation; he did not stay till they applied themselves to him, to beg for a night's lodging; but when he saw them, *ver. 17.* enquired into their circumstances, and prevented them with his kindness: thus our good God doth, answers before we call. Note, A charitable disposition expects only opportunity, not importunity, to do good, and will succour upon sight, unthought unto. Hence we read of a bountiful eye, *Prov. xxii. 9.* If Gilead was like Sodom, this old man was like Lot in Sodom, who sat in the gate to invite strangers, *Gen. xix. 1.* Thus Job opened his doors to the traveller, and would not suffer him to lodge in the street, *Job xxxi. 32.* Observe, (1.) How ready he was to give credit to the Levite's account of himself, when he saw no reason at all to question the truth of it. Charity is not apt to distrust, but hopeth all things, *1 Cor. xiii. 7.* and will not make use of Nabal's excuse for his churlishness to David, many servants now-a-days break away from their masters, *1 Sam. xxv. 10.* The Levite, in his account of himself, professeth, that he was now going to the house of the Lord, *ver. 18.* for there he designed to attend, either with a trespass-offering for the sins of his family, or with a peace-offering for the mercies of his family, or both, before he went to his own house. And if the men of Gibeah had any intimation of his being that way bound, probably they would not therefore entertain him; the Samaritans would not receive Christ, because his face was towards Jerusalem, *Luke ix. 53.* But for that reason, because he was a Levite, and was now going to the house of the Lord, this good old man was the more kind to him. Thus he received a disciple in the name of a disciple, a servant of God for his master's sake. (2.) How free he was to give him entertainment. The Levite was himself provided with all necessities, *ver. 19.* wanted nothing but a lodging, but his generous host would be himself at the charge of his entertainment, *ver. 20.* Let all thy wants be upon me, so he brought him into his house, *ver. 21.* Thus God will some way or other raise up friends for his people and ministers, even when they seem forlorn.

22. ¶ Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him. 23. And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them; and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, nay, I pray you do not so wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly. 24. Behold, here is my daughter, a maiden; and his concubine; them will I bring out now; and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you:

you : but unto this man do not so vile a thing. 25. But the men would not hearken to him : so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them ; and they knew her and abused her all the night until the morning : and when the day began to spring, they let her go. 26. Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down at the door of the man's house, where her lord was, till it was light. 27. And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way : and behold, the woman his concubine was fallen down at the door of the house, and her hands were upon the threshold. 28. And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going : but none answered. Then the man took her up upon an ass, and the man rose up, and gat him unto his place. 29. ¶ And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, together with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel. 30. And it was so, that all that saw it said, there was no such deed done nor seen, from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt, unto this day : consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds.

Here is, 1. The great wickedness of the men of Gibeah ; one could not imagine that ever it should enter into the heart of men that had the use of human reason, of Israelites that had the benefit of divine revelation, to be so very wicked. Lord, what is man ! saith David, what a mean creature is he ! Lord, what is man, may we say, upon the reading of this story, what a vile creature is he, when he is given up to his own heart's lust ! (1.) The sinners are here called the sons of Belial, i. e. ungovernable men, men that would endure no yoke. Children of the devil, for he is Belial, resembling him, and joining with him in rebellion against God and his government. Sons of Benjamin, of whom Moses had said, *the beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him*, (Deut. xxxiii. 12.) are become such sons of Belial, that an honest man cannot lodge in safety among them. (2.) The sufferers were a Levite and his wife, and that kind man that gave them entertainment. We are strangers upon earth, and must expect strange usage. It is said *they were making their hearts merry*, when this trouble came upon them, ver. 22. If the mirth were innocent, it teaches us of what uncertain continuance all our creature-comforts and enjoyments are ; when we are never so well pleased with our friends, we know not how near our enemies are ; nor if it be well with us this hour, can we be sure it will be so the next. If the mirth were sinful and excessive, let it be a warning to us to keep a strict guard upon ourselves, that we grow not intemperate in the use of lawful things, nor be transported into indecencies by our cheerfulness, for *the end of that mirth is heaviness*. God can soon change the notes of those that are making their hearts merry, and turn their laughter into mourning, and their joy into heaviness.

Let us see what the wickedness of these Benjamites was.

1. They made a rude and insolent assault in the night upon the habitation of an honest man, that not only lived peaceably among them, but kept a good house, and was a blessing and ornament to their city. They beset the house round, and to the great terror of those within, beat as hard as they could at the door, ver. 27. A man's house is his castle, in which he ought to be both safe and quiet, and where there is law, it is taken under the special protection of it ; but there was no king in Israel to keep the peace, and secure honest men from the sons of violence.

2. They had a particular spite at the strangers that were within their gates, that only desired a night's lodging among them, contrary to the laws of hospitality, which all civilized nations have accounted sacred, and which the master of the house pleaded with them, ver. 23. *Seeing that this man is come into my house*. They are base and abject spirits indeed that will trample upon the helpless, and use a man the worse for his being a stranger, whom they knew no ill by.

3. They designed in the most filthy and abominable manner (not to be thought of without horror and detestation) to abuse the Levite, whom perhaps they had observed to be young and comely. *Bring him forth that we may know him*. We should certainly have concluded they meant only to enquire whence he came, and to know his character, but that the good man of the house, who understood their meaning too well, by his answer lets us know that they designed the gratification of that most unnatural and worse than brutish lust, which was expressly forbidden by the law of Moses, and called an *abomination*, Lev. xviii. 22. They that are guilty of it, are ranked in the New Testament amongst the worst and vilest of sinners, 1 Tim. i. 10. and such as *shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 9. Now, (1.) This was the sin of Sodom, and from thence is called Sodomy. The Dead Sea, which was the standing monument of God's vengeance upon Sodom for its filthiness, was one of the boundaries of Canaan, and lay not many miles off from Gibeah ; we may suppose the men of Gibeah had seen it many a time, and yet would not take warning by it, but did worse than Sodom, Ezek. xvi. 48. and sinned just after the *similitude of their transgression*. Who would have expected (saith Bishop Hall) such extreme abomination to come out of the loins of Jacob ? Even the worst pagans were saints to them. What did it avail them that they had the ark of God in Shiloh, when they had Sodom in their streets ? God's law in their fringes, but the devil in their hearts ; nothing but hell itself can yield a worse creature than a depraved Israelite. (2.) This was the punishment of their idolatry, that sin to which they were, above all other, most addicted. Because they *liked not to retain God in their knowledge*, therefore he gave them up to these vile affections, by which they dishonoured themselves as they had by their idolatry dishonoured him, and turned his glory into shame ; Rom. i. 24—28. See and admire in this instance the patience of God ; why were not these sons of Belial struck blind, as the Sodomites were ? Why was not fire and brimstone mined from heaven upon their city ? It was because God would leave it to Israel to punish them by the sword, and would reserve his own punishment of them for the future state, in which those that go *after strange flesh*, shall suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7.

4. They were deaf to the reproofs and reasonings of the good man of the house, who being well acquainted (we may suppose) with the story of Lot and the Sodomites, seeing the men of this city imitate the Sodomites, set himself to imitate Lot, ver. 23, 24. Compare Gen. xix. 6, 7, 8. He went out to them as Lot did, spoke them fair, called them brethren, begged of them to desist, pleaded the protection of his house which his guests were under, represented to them the great wickedness of their attempt ; do not so

wickedly, so very wickedly ; calls it folly, and a vile thing. But in one thing he conformed too far to Lot's example (as we are apt in imitating good men to follow them, even in their false steps) in offering them his daughter to do what they would with. He had not power thus to prostitute his daughter, nor ought he to have done this evil that good might come. But this wicked proposal of his may be in part excused from the great surprize and terror he was in, his mighty concern for his guests, and his having too close a regard to what Lot did in the like case, especially not finding that the angels, who were by, reprov'd him for it. And perhaps he hoped that his mentioning of this, as a more natural gratification of their lust, would have sent them back to their common whores. But *they would not hearken to him*, ver. 25. Headstrong lusts are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, they fear the conscience and maketh it insensible.

They got the Levite's wife among them, and abused her to death, ver. 25. They slighted the old man's offer of his daughter to their lust, either because she was not handsome, or because they knew her to be one of great gravity and modesty ; but when the Levite brought them his concubine, they took her with them by force to the place appointed for their filthiness. Josephus, in his narrative of this story, makes her to be the person they had a design upon when they beset the house, and saith nothing of their villainous design upon the Levite himself. They saw her (he saith) in the street, when they came into the town, and were smitten with her beauty ; and perhaps, though she was reconciled to her husband, her looks did not speak her to be one of the most modest ; many bring mischief of this kind upon themselves by their loose carriage and behaviour, a little spark may kindle a great fire. One would think the Levite should have followed them to see what became of his wife, but it is probable he durst not, for fear they should do him a mischief. In the miserable end of this woman, we may see the righteous hand of God punishing her for her former uncleanness, when she played the whore against her husband, ver. 12. Though her father had countenanced her, and her husband had forgiven her, and the fault was forgotten now the quarrel was made up, yet God remembered it against her, when he suffered these wicked men thus wretchedly to abuse her ; in doing which, how unrighteous soever they were, in permitting it, the Lord was righteous. Her punishment answered her sin, *culpa libido fuit, pena libido fuit*. By the law of Moses she was to have been put to death for her adultery : she escaped that punishment from men, yet vengeance pursued her ; for if there was no king in Israel, yet there was a God in Israel, a God that judgeth in the earth. We must not think it enough to make our peace with men, whom by our sins we have wronged, but are concerned by repentance and faith to make our peace with God, who sees not as man sees, nor makes so light of sin, as men often do. The justice of God in this matter doth not at all extenuate the horrid wickedness of those men of Gibeah, than which nothing could be more barbarous and inhuman.

2. The notice that was sent at this wickedness to all the tribes of Israel. The poor abused woman made towards her husband's lodgings, as soon as ever the approach of the day-light obliged the sons of Belial to let her go, (for those works of darkness hate and dread the light) ver. 25. Down she fell at the door, with her hands on the threshold, begging pardon (as it were) for her former transgression, and in that posture of a penitent, with her mouth in the dust, she expired ; there he found her, ver. 26, 27. supposed her asleep, or overcome with shame and confusion for what had happened, but soon perceived she was dead, ver. 28. took up her dead body, which we may suppose had all over it marks of the hands, the blows and other abuses she had received. On this sad occasion he waved his purpose of going to Shiloh, and went directly home ; he that went out in hopes to return rejoicing, came in again melancholy and disconsolate, sat down and considered, is this an injury fit to be passed by ? He cannot call for fire from heaven to consume the men of Gibeah, as those angels did, who were after the same manner insulted by the Sodomites. There was no king in Israel, nor (for aught appears) any Sanhedrim, or great council to appeal to, and demand justice from. Phinehas is high-priest, but he attends closely to the business of the sanctuary, and will be no judge or divider ; he has therefore no other way left him, but to appeal to the people, let the community be judge ; though they had no general stated assembly of all the tribes, yet it is probable each tribe had a meeting of their chiefs within itself ; to each of the tribes, in their respective meetings, he sent by special messengers a remonstrance of the wrong that was done him, in all its aggravating circumstances, and with it a piece of his wife's dead body, ver. 29. both to confirm the truth of the story, and to affect them the more with it. He divided it into twelve pieces, according to the bones, so some read it, i. e. by the joints, sending one to each tribe, even to Benjamin among the rest, in hopes some among them would have been moved to join in punishing so great a villany, and the more warmly, because committed by some of their own tribe. It did indeed look very barbarous thus to mangle a dead body, which having been so wretchedly dishonoured, ought to have been decently interred ; but the Levite designed hereby, (1.) To represent their barbarous usage of his wife, whom they had better have cut in pieces thus, than use as they did. (2.) To express his own passionate concern, and thereby to excite the like in them.

And it had the desired effect. All that saw the pieces of the dead body, and were told how the matter was, expressed the same sentiments upon it. (1.) That the men of Gibeah had been guilty of a very heinous piece of wickedness, the like to which had never been known before in Israel, ver. 30. It was a complicated crime, loaded and blackened with all possible aggravations. They were not such fools as to make a mock at this sin, or turn the story off with a jest. (2.) That a general assembly of all Israel should be called to debate what was fit to be done for the punishment of this wickedness, that a stop might be put to this threatening inundation of debauchery, and the wrath of God might not be poured upon the whole nation for it. It is not a common case, and therefore they stir up one another to come together upon the occasion with this, *Consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds*. We have here the three great rules by which they that sit in council ought to go in every arduous affair. (1.) Let every man retire into himself, and weigh the matter impartially and fully in his own thoughts, and seriously and calmly consider it, without prejudice on either side, before he speaks to it. (2.) Let them freely talk it over, and every man take advice of his friend, know his opinion, with his reasons, and weigh them. (3.) Then let every man speak his mind, and give his vote according to his conscience. In the multitude of such counsellors there is safety.

C H A P. XX.

Into the book of the wars of the Lord the story of this chapter must be brought, but it looks as sad and uncomfortable as any article in all that history ; for there is nothing in it that looks in the least bright or pleasant, but the pious zeal of Israel against the wickedness of the men of Gibeah, which made it on their side a just and holy war, but otherwise the obduracy of the Benjamites in protecting their criminals which

which was the foundation of the war, the vast loss which the Israelites sustained in carrying on the war, and though the righteous cause was victorious at last, yet the issuing of the war, in the almost utter extirpation of the tribe of Benjamin, makes it from first to last melancholy. And yet this happened soon after the glorious settlement of Israel in the land of promise, upon which one would have expected every thing to be prosperous and serene. In this chapter we have, (1.) The Levite's cause heard in a general convention of the tribes, ver. 1—7. (2.) An unanimous resolve to avenge his quarrel upon the men of Gibeah, ver. 8—11. (3.) The Benjamites appearing in defence of the criminals, ver. 12—17. (4.) The defeat of Israel in the first and second day's battle, ver. 18—23. (5.) Their humbling themselves before God upon that occasion, ver. 26—28. (6.) The total rout they gave the Benjamites in the third engagement, by a stratagem, by which they were all cut off, except six hundred men, ver. 29—48. And all this the effect of the indignities done to one poor Levite and his wife; so little do they that do iniquity consider what will be in the end thereof.

1. **THEN** all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as one man, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the LORD in Mizpeh. 2. And the chief of all the people, even of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword. 3. (Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel were gone up to Mizpeh.) Then said the children of Israel; Tell us, how was this wickedness? 4. And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was slain, answered and said, I came into Gibeah, that belongeth to Benjamin, I and my concubine to lodge. 5. And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about upon me by night, and thought to have slain me: and my concubine have they forced, that she is dead. 6. And I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel: for they have committed lewdness and folly in Israel. 7. Behold, ye are all children of Israel; give here your advice and counsel. 8. ¶ And all the people arose as one man, saying, We will not any of us go to his tent, neither will we any of us turn into his house. 9. But now, this shall be the thing which we will do to Gibeah; we will go up by lot against it: 10. And we will take ten men of an hundred; throughout all the tribes of Israel, and an hundred of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand, to fetch victual for the people, that they may do, when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have wrought in Israel. 11. So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man.

Here is, 1. A general meeting of all the congregation of Israel, to examine the matter concerning the Levite's concubine, and to consider what was to be done upon it, ver. 1, 2. It doth not appear that they were summoned by the authority of any one common head, but they came together by the consent and agreement, as it were, of one common heart, fired with a holy zeal for the honour of God and Israel. (1.) The place of their meeting was Mizpeh, they gathered together unto the Lord there; for Mizpeh was so very near to Shiloh, that their encampment might very well be supposed to reach from Mizpeh to Shiloh; Shiloh was a small town, and therefore when there was a general meeting of the people to present themselves before God, they chose Mizpeh for their head-quarters, which was the next adjoining city of note; perhaps because they were not willing to give that trouble to Shiloh, which so great an assembly would occasion; it being the residence of the priests that attended the tabernacle. (2.) The persons that met were all Israel from Dan (the city very lately so called, chap. xviii. 29.) in the north, to Beer-sheba in the south, with the land of Gilead, i. e. the tribes on the other side Jordan, all as one man, so unanimous were they in their concern for the public good. Here was an assembly of the people of God, not a convocation of the Levites and priests, though a Levite was the person principally concerned in the cause, but an assembly of the people, to whom the Levite referred himself with an *appello populum*; the people of God were four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword, i. e. were armed and disciplined, and fit for service; and some of them perhaps, such as had known the wars of Canaan, Judg. iii. 1. In this assembly of all Israel, the chief (or corners) of the people, (for rulers are the corner stones of the people that keep all together) presented themselves as the representatives of the rest; they rendered themselves at their respective posts, at the head of the thousands and hundreds; the fifties and tens, over which they presided; for so much order and government we may suppose at least they had among them, though they had no general or commander in chief. So that here was, (1.) A general congress of the states for counsel, the chief of the people presented themselves, to lead and direct in this affair. (2.) A general rendezvous of the militia for action, all that drew sword and were men of war, ver. 17. not hirelings or pressed men, but the best freeholders, that went at their own charge. Israel was above six hundred thousand when they came into Canaan, and we have reason to think they were at this time much increased, rather than diminished, but then all between twenty and sixty were military men; now we may suppose more than the one half exempted from bearing arms, to husband the land; so that there were as the trained bands. The militia of the two tribes and a half were forty thousand, Josh. iv. 13. But the tribes were many more.

2. Notice given to the tribe of Benjamin of this meeting, ver. 3. They heard that the children of Israel were gone up to Mizpeh; probably they had legal summons sent them to appear with their brethren, that the cause might be fairly debated, before any resolutions were taken-upon it, and so the mischief that followed would have been happily prevented; but the notice

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they had of this meeting, rather hardened and exasperated them, than awakened them to think of the things that belonged to their peace and honour.

3. A solemn examination of the crime charged upon the men of Gibeah. A very horrid representation of it had been made by the report of the messengers that were sent to call them together, but it was fit it should be more closely enquired into, because such things are often made worse than really they were; a committee therefore was appointed to examine the witnesses (upon oath, no doubt) and to report the matter. It is only the testimony of the Levite himself that is here recorded, but it is probable his servant and the old man were examined, and gave in their testimony, for that more than one were examined, appears by the original, ver. 3. which is, *tell ye us*, and the law was, that none should be put to death, much less so many, upon the testimony of one witness only. The Levite gives a particular account of the matter. That he came into Gibeah only as a traveller, to lodge there, not giving the least umbrage or suspicion that he designed them any ill turn, ver. 4. That the men of Gibeah, even those that were of substance among them, that should have been a protection to the stranger within their gates, riotously set upon the house where he lodged, *thought to have slain him*, he could not for shame relate the demand which they without shame made, chap. xix. 22. They declared their sin as Sodom, even the sin of Sodom, but his modesty would not suffer him to repeat it, it was sufficient to say they would have slain him, for he would rather have been slain than have submitted to their villany; and if they had got him into their hands, they would have abused him to death; witness what they had done to his concubine, they have forced her that she is dead, ver. 5. And to excite in his countrymen an indignation at this wickedness, he had sent pieces of the mangled body to all the tribes, which had fetched them together to hear their testimony against the lewdness and folly committed in Israel, ver. 6. All lewdness is folly, but especially lewdness in Israel, for them to defile their own bodies, who have the honourable seal of the covenant in their flesh; for them to defy the divine vengeance to whom it is so clearly revealed from heaven: Nabal is their name, and folly is with them. He concludes his declaration with an appeal to the judgment of the court, ver. 7. *Ye are all children of Israel*, and therefore ye know law and judgment, (Ester 1. 13.) Ye are a holy people to God, and have a dread of every thing which will dishonour God, and defile the land; ye are of the community, members of the same body, and therefore likely to feel from the distempers of it; ye are children of Israel, that ought to take particular care of the Levites, God's tribe among you, and therefore give here your advice and counsel, what is to be done.

4. The resolution they came to hereupon, which was, that now they were together they would not disperse till they had seen vengeance taken upon this wicked city, which was the reproach and scandal of their nation. Observe, (1.) Their zeal against the lewdness that was committed. They would not return to their houses, how much sorer their families and their affairs at home wanted them, till they had vindicated the honour of God and Israel, and recovered with their swords, if it could not be had otherwise, that satisfaction for the crime which the justice of the nation called for, ver. 8. By this they shewed themselves children of Israel indeed, that they preferred the public interest before their private concerns. (2.) Their prudence in sending out a considerable body of their forces to fetch provisions for the rest, ver. 9, 10. one of ten, and he chosen by lot, forty thousand in all must go to their respective countries, from whence they came, to fetch bread, and other necessities for the subsistence of this great army: for when they came from home they took with them provisions only for a journey to Mizpeh, not for an encampment (which might prove long) before Gibeah. This was to prevent their scattering to forage for themselves, which if they had done, it would have been hard to get them all together again, especially all in so good a mind. Note, When there appears in people a pious zeal for any good work, it is best to strike while the iron is hot, for such zeal is apt to cool quickly, if the prosecution of it be delayed. Let it never be said, we left that good work to be done tomorrow, which we could as well have done to-day. (3.) Their unanimity in these counsels, and the execution of them. The resolution was voted, *nemine contradicente*, ver. 8. it was one and all; and when it was put in execution, they were knit together as one man, ver. 11. This was their glory and strength, that the several tribes had no separate interests when the common good was concerned.

12. ¶ And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness is this that is done among you? 13. Now therefore deliver us the men, the children of Belial, which are in Gibeah; that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel: 14. But the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities, unto Gibeah, to go out to battle against the children of Israel. 15. And the children of Benjamin were numbered at that time out of the cities, twenty and six thousand men that drew sword, beside the inhabitants of Gibeah, which were numbered seven hundred chosen men. 16. Among all this people, there were seven hundred chosen men left-handed, every one could sling stones at an hair-breadth, and not miss. 17. And the men of Israel, beside Benjamin, were numbered four hundred thousand men that drew sword; all these were men of war.

Here is, 1. The fair and just demand which the tribes of Israel, now encamped, sent to the tribe of Benjamin, to deliver up the malefactors of Gibeah to justice, ver. 12, 13. If the tribe of Benjamin had come up, as they ought to have done to the assembly, and agreed with them in their resolutions, they had had none to deal with but the men of Gibeah only, but they by their absence, taking part with the criminals, application must be made to them all; the Israelites were zealous against the wickedness that was committed, yet they were discreet in their zeal, and did not think it would justify them in falling upon the whole tribe of Benjamin, unless they by refusing to give up the criminals, and protecting them against justice, should make themselves guilty, *ex post facto*. They desire them to consider how great the wickedness was that was committed, ver. 12. and that it was done among them; and how necessary it was therefore, that they should either punish the malefactors with death themselves, according to the law of Moses, or deliver them up to this general assembly, to be so much the more publicly

publicly and solemnly punished, that evil might be put away from Israel; the national guilt removed, the infection stopped by cutting off the gangrened part, and national judgments prevented; for the sin was so very like that of the Sodomites, that they might justly fear, if they did not punish it, God would rain hail from heaven upon them, as he did, not only upon Sodom, but the neighbouring cities. If the Israelites had not made this reasonable demand, they would have had much more reason to lament the following desolations of Benjamin. All methods of accommodation must be used before we go to war, or go to law. The demand was like that of Joab's to Abel, 2 Sam. xx. 20, 21. Only deliver up the traitor, and we will lay down our arms. On those terms, and no other, God will be at peace with us, that we part with our sins, that we mortify and crucify our lusts, and then all shall be well, his anger will be turned away.

2. The wretched obduracy and perverseness of the men of Benjamin, who seem to have been as unanimous and zealous in their resolutions to stand by the criminals, as the rest of the tribes were to punish them; so little sense had they of their honour, duty, and interest.

1. They were so prodigiously vile, as to patronize the wickedness that was committed. They would not hearken to the voice of their brethren, ver. 13. Either because they of that tribe were generally more vicious and debauched at this time than the rest of the tribes, and therefore would not bear to have that punished in others, which they knew themselves guilty of. Some of the most fruitful and pleasant parts of Canaan fell to the lot of this tribe; their land, like that of Sodom, was as the garden of the Lord, which perhaps helped to make the inhabitants, like the men of Sodom, wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly, Gen. xiii. 10—13. Or, because (as Bishop Patrick suggests) they took it ill that the other tribes should meddle with the concerns of theirs; they would not do that which they knew was their duty, because they were minded of it by their brethren, by whom they scorned to be taught and controlled. If there were any wise men among them that would have complied with the demand made, yet they were overpowered by the majority, who thus made the crime of the men of Gibeah their own. Thus we have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, if we lay a confederacy with those that have, and make ourselves guilty of other men's sins, by countenancing and defending them. It seems there is no cause to be bad but it will find some patrons, some advocates to appear for it; but *wee be to those by whom such offences come*. Those will have a great deal to answer for that obstruct the course of necessary justice, and strengthen the hands of the wicked, by saying, *O wicked man, thou shalt not die*.

2. They were so prodigiously vain and presumptuous, as to make head against the united force of all Israel. Sure never men were so wretchedly infatuated as they were, when they took up arms in opposition. (1.) To so good a cause as Israel had. How could they expect to prosper when they fought against justice, and consequently against the just God himself? against them that had the high-priest, and the divine oracle on their side, and to act in downright rebellion against the sacred and supreme authority of the nation. (2.) To so great a force as Israel had. The disproportion of their numbers was much greater than that, Luke xiv. 31, 32. where he that had but ten thousand, durst not meet him that came against him with twenty thousand, and therefore desired conditions of peace. There the enemy was but two to one, here above fifteen to one, yet they despised conditions of peace. All the forces they could bring into the field were but twenty-six thousand men, besides seven hundred men of Gibeah, ver. 15. yet with these they will dare to face forty thousand men of Israel, ver. 17. Thus sinners are infatuated to their own ruin, and provoke him to jealousy, who is infinitely stronger than they, 1 Cor. x. 22. But it should seem they depended upon the skill of their men, to make up what was wanting in numbers, especially a regiment of slingers, seven hundred men, who, though left-handed, were so dextrous at slinging stones, that they would not be a hair's breadth beside their mark, ver. 16. But these good marksmen were very much out in their aim, when they espoused this ill cause. Benjamin signifies the son of the right hand, yet we find his posterity left-handed.

18. ¶ And the children of Israel arose, and went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin? And the LORD said, Judah shall go up first. 19. And the children of Israel rose up in the morning, and encamped against Gibeah. 20. And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin, and the men of Israel put themselves in array to fight against them at Gibeah. 21. And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites that day, twenty and two thousand men. 22. And the people, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves, and set their battle again in array, in the place where they put themselves in array the first day. 23. (And the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until even, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother? and the LORD said, Go up against him.) 24. And the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin the second day. 25. And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again, eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword.

We have here the defeat of the men of Israel in their first and second battle with the Benjamites.

1. Before their first engagement they asked counsel of God concerning the order of the battle, and were directed, and yet they were sorely beaten. They did not think it was proper to ask of God, whether they should go up at all against Benjamin, the case was plain enough, the men of Gibeah must be punished for their wickedness, and they must do it; or it will not be done; but who shall go first? ver. 18. that is, who shall be general of our army? For whichever tribe was appointed to go first, the prince of that tribe must be looked upon as commander in chief of the whole body; for if they had meant it of the order of their march only, it had been proper to have asked who shall go next, and then who next? But if they knew that Judah must go first, they know they must all observe the orders of the prince of that tribe. This honour was done to Judah, because the Lord Jesus was to spring from that tribe, who was in all things to have the pre-eminence. The tribe that went up first had the most honourable post, but

withal the most dangerous, and probably lost most in the engagement. Who would strive for precedence that sees the peril of it!

Yet though Judah, that strong and valiant tribe, goes up first, and all the tribes of Israel attend them, little Benjamin (so he is called *Psalm* lxxviii. 27.) is too hard for them all. The whole army lays siege to Gibeah, ver. 19. The Benjamites advance to raise the siege, and the army prepares to give them a warm reception, ver. 20. Turns upon them to fight them; ver. 20. But between the Benjamites that attacked there in the front with incredible fury, and the men of Gibeah that sallied out upon their rear, they were put into confusion, and lost twenty-two thousand men, ver. 21. Here were no prisoners taken, for there was no quarter given, but all put to the sword.

2. Before the second engagement, they again asked counsel of God, and more solemnly than before, for they *wept before the Lord, until even*, ver. 23. lamenting the loss of so many brave men, especially as it was a token of God's displeasure, and would give occasion to the Benjamites to triumph in the success of their wickedness. Altho at this time they did not ask who should go up first? but whether they should go up at all? They intimate a reason, why they should scruple it, especially now providence had frowned upon them, because Benjamin was their brother; and a readiness to lay down their arms, if God should so order them. God bid them go up, he allowed the attempt; though Benjamin was their brother, he was a gangrened member of their body, and must be cut off. Upon this they encouraged themselves, perhaps more in their own strength than in the divine commission, and made a second attempt upon the forces of the rebels, in the same place where the former battle was fought, ver. 22. in hopes to retrieve their credit upon the same spot of ground where they had lost it, which they would not superstitiously change, as if there were any thing unlucky in the place; but they were this second time repelled, with the loss of eighteen thousand men, ver. 25. The former day's loss, and this, amounted to forty thousand, which was just a tenth part of the whole army, and the same number that they had drawn out by lot to fetch victuals, ver. 20. They decimated themselves for that service, and now God again decimated them for the slaughter.

But what shall we say to these things, that so just and honourable a cause should thus be put to the worst once and again? Were they not fighting God's battles against sin? Had they not his commission? what; and yet miscarry thus? 1. God's judgments are a great deep, and his way is in the sea. Clouds and darkness are often round about him, but judgment and justice are always the habitation of his throne. We may be sure of the righteousness, when we cannot see the reasons of God's proceedings. 2. God would hereby shew them, and us in them, that *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong*, that numbers are not to be confided in, which perhaps the Israelites did with too much assurance. We must never lay that weight on an arm of flesh, which the rock of ages only will bear. 3. God designed hereby to correct Israel for their sins. They did well to shew such a zeal against the wickedness of Gibeah, but *were not there with them, even with them, sins against the Lord their God*? Those must be made to know their own iniquity, that are forward in condemning the iniquity of others. Some think it was a rebuke to them, for not witnessing against the idolatry of Micah, and the Danites, by which their religion was corrupted, as they now did against the lewdness of Gibeah and the Benjamites, by which the public peace was disturbed, though God had particularly ordered them to levy war upon idolaters, *Deut.* xiii. 12. 4. God would hereby teach us, not to think it strange, if a good cause go by the worst for a while, nor to judge of the merits of it by the success of it. The interests of grace in the heart and of religion in the world may be soiled, and suffer great loss, and seem to be quite run down, but judgment will be brought forth to victory at last. *Vincitur in praelio sed non in bello*. Right may fall, but it shall arise.

26. ¶ Then all the children of Israel, and all the people went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings before the LORD. 27. And the children of Israel enquired of the LORD, (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days. 28. And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days) saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the LORD said, Go up; for to-morrow I will deliver them into thine hand. 29. And Israel set liers in wait round about Gibeah. 30. And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put themselves in array against Gibeah, as at other times. 31. And the children of Benjamin went out against the people, and were drawn away from the city, and they began to smite of the people, and kill as at other times, in the highways, of which one goeth up to the house of God, and the other to Gibeah in the field, about thirty men of Israel. 32. And the children of Benjamin said, They are smitten down before us, as at the first. But the children of Israel said, Let us flee, and draw them from the city, into the highways. 33. And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place, and put themselves in array at Baal-tamar: and the liers in wait of Israel came forth out of their places, even out of the meadows of Gibeah. 34. And there came against Gibeah ten thousand chosen men, out of all Israel, and the battle was sore: but they knew not that evil was near them. 35. And the LORD smote Benjamin before Israel: and the children of Israel destroyed of the Benjamites that day, twenty and five thousand and an hundred men, all these drew the sword. 36. So the children of Benjamin saw that they were smitten: for the men of Israel gave place to the Benjamites, because they trusted unto the liers in wait which they had set beside Gibeah. 37. And the liers in wait hastened, and rushed upon Gibeah, and

and the liers in wait drew *themselves* along, and smote all the city with the edge of the sword. 38. Now there was an appointed sign between the men of Israel and the liers in wait, that they should make a great flame with smoke to rise up out of the city. 39. And when the men of battle retired in the battle, Benjamin began to smite and kill of the men of Israel about thirty persons: for they said, Surely they are smitten down before us, as in the first battle. 40. But when the flame began to arise up out of the city, with a pillar of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and behold, the flame of the city ascended up to heaven. 41. And when the men of Israel turned again, the men of Benjamin were amazed: for they saw that evil was come upon them. 42. Therefore they turned *their backs* before the men of Israel, unto the way of the wilderness, but the battle overtook them: and them which came out of the cities, they destroyed in the midst of them. 43. Thus they inclosed the Benjamites round about, and chased them, and trod them down with ease over against Gibeah toward the sun-rising. 44. And there fell of Benjamin eighteen thousand men; all these were men of valour. 45. And they turned and fled towards the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon: and they gleaned of them in the highways five thousand men, and pursued hard after them unto Gidom, and slew two thousand men of them. 46. So that all which fell that day of Benjamin, were twenty and five thousand men that drew the sword; all these were men of valour. 47. But six hundred men turned and fled to the wilderness unto the rock Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months. 48. And the men of Israel turned again upon the children of Benjamin, and smote them with the edge of the sword, as well the men of every city, as the beast, and all that came to hand; also they set on fire all the cities they came to.

We have here a full account of the complete victory which the Israelites obtained over the Benjamites in the third engagement; the righteous cause was victorious at last, when the managers of it amended what had been amiss; for when a good cause suffers, it is for want of good management. Observe then how the victory was obtained, and how it was pursued.

1. How the victory was obtained. Two things they had trusted too much to in the former engagements, the goodness of their cause, and the superiority of their numbers; it was true, that they had both right and strength on their side, which were great advantages. But they depended too much upon them, to the neglect of those duties, which now this third time, when they see their error, they apply themselves to.

(1.) They were then so confident of the goodness of their cause, that they thought it needless to address themselves to God for his presence and blessing, they took that for granted, nay, perhaps they concluded that he owed them his favour, and could not in justice withhold it, since it was in defence of virtue that he appeared, and took up arms. But God having shewed them that he was under no obligation to succeed their enterprise, that he neither needed them, nor was tied to them, that they were more indebted to him for the honour of being ministers of his justice, than he to them for the service, now they became humble petitioners for success. Before they only consulted God's oracle, *who shall go up first? and shall we go up?* But now they implored his favour, fasted and prayed, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, ver. 26. to make an atonement for sin, and an acknowledgment of their dependence upon God, as an expression of their desire towards him. We cannot expect the presence of God with us, unless we thus seek it in the way he has appointed. And when they were in this frame, and thus sought the Lord, then he not only ordered them to go up against the Benjamites the third time, but gave them a promise of victory, *tomorrow I will deliver them into thine hand*, ver. 28.

(2.) They were then so confident of the greatness of their strength, that they thought it needless to use any art, to lay any ambush, or form a stratagem, not doubting but to conquer them purely by strong hand, but now they saw it was requisite to use some policy, as if they had an enemy to deal with them that had been superior in number; accordingly they set liers in wait, ver. 29. and gained their point, as their fathers did before Ai, *Josh. viii.* Stratagems of that kind being most likely to take effect after a previous defeat, which has flushed the enemy, and made the pretended flight the less suspected. The management of this artifice is here very largely described: The assurance God had given them of success in this day's action, instead of making them remiss and presumptuous, set all heads and hands on work for the effecting of what God had promised. Observe, The method they took; the body of the army faced the city of Gibeah, as they had done before, advancing towards the gates, ver. 30. The Benjamites, the body of whose army was now quartered in Gibeah, sallied out upon them, charged them with great bravery; the besiegers gave back, took on them to retire with precipitation, as if their hearts failed them upon the sight of the Benjamites, which they were willing to believe, who proudly conceived, that by their former success they made themselves very formidable; some loss the Israelites sustained in this counterfeit flight, about thirty men were cut off in the rear, ver. 31—39. But when the Benjamites were all drawn out of the city, the ambush seized the city, ver. 37. gave a signal to the body of the army, ver. 38—40. which immediately turned upon them, ver. 41. and it should seem another considerable party that was posted at Baal-tamar, came upon them at the same time, ver. 33. So that the Benjamites were quite surrounded, which put them in the greatest consternation that could be; sense of guilt now disheartened them, and the higher their hopes had been raised, the more grievous was their confusion. At first the battle was *for*, ver. 34. the Benjamites laid about them with fury, but when they saw what a snare they were drawn into, they thought one pair of heels (as we say) were worth two pair of hands, and they made the best of their way towards the wilderness, ver. 42. but in vain, the battle overtook them; and, to complete their distress, they which came out of the cities of Israel, that waited to see the events of the battle, joined with the pursuers, and helped to cut them off. Every man's hand was against them.

Observe, In this story, 1. That the Benjamites, in the beginning of the battle, were confident that the day was their own. *They are smitten down before us*, ver. 32—39. Sometimes God suffers wicked men to be lifted up in successes and hopes, that their fall may be the sorer. See how short their joy is, and their triumphing but for a moment. *Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast*, except he has reason to boast in God. 2. Evil was near them, and they did not know it, ver. 34. But, ver. 41. they saw, when it was too late to prevent it, that evil was come upon them. What evils may at any time be near us, we cannot tell, but the less they are feared the heavier they fall; sinners will not be persuaded to see evil near them, but how dreadful will it be when it comes, and there is no escaping, 1 *Theff. v. 3.* Though the men of Israel played their parts so well in this engagement, yet the victory is ascribed to God, ver. 35. *The Lord smote Benjamin before Israel.* The battle was his, and so was the success. 4. They trod down the men of Benjamin with ease, when God fought against them, ver. 43. It is an easy thing to trample upon those who have made God their enemy. See *Mal. iv. 3.*

2. How the victory was prosecuted and improved, in a military execution done upon these sinners against their own souls. (1.) Gibeah itself was destroyed in the first place, that nest of lewdness. The ambush that entered the city by surprise, drew *themselves* along, i. e. dispersed themselves into the several parts of it, which they might easily do now all the men of war were sallied out, and very presumptuously left it defenceless; and they smote all they found, even women and children with the sword, ver. 37. and set fire to the city, ver. 40. Sin brings ruin upon cities. (2.) The army in the field was quite routed and cut off, eighteen thousand men of valour lay dead upon the spot, ver. 44. (3.) Those that escaped from the field were pursued and cut off in their flight, to the number of seven thousand, ver. 45. It is to no purpose to think of outrunning divine vengeance. *Evil pursues sinners*, and it will overtake them. (4.) Even they that tarried at home were involved in the ruin. They let their sword devour for ever, not considering that it would be bitterness in the latter end, as Abner pleads long after, when he was at the head of an army of Benjamites, probably with an eye to this very story, 2 *Sam. ii. 25, 26.* They put to the sword all that breathed, and set fire to all the cities, ver. 48. So that of all the tribe of Benjamin, for aught appears, there remained none alive but six hundred men that took shelter in the rock Rimmon, and lay close there four months, ver. 47. Now, 1. It is hard to justify this severity, as it was Israel's act. The whole tribe of Benjamin was culpable, but must they therefore be used as devoted Canaanites? That it was done in the heat of war, that this was the way of prosecuting victories, which the sword of Israel had been accustomed to, that the Israelites were extremely exasperated against the Benjamites for the slaughter they had made among them in the two former engagements, will go but a little way to excuse the cruelty of this execution. It is true, they had sworn, that whosoever did not come up to Mizpeh should be put to death, chap. xxi. 5. But that if it were a justifiable oath, yet extended only to the men of war, the rest were not expected to come. Yet, 2. It is easy to justify the hand of God in it; Benjamin had sinned against him, and God had threatened, that if they forgot him, they should perish as the nations that were before them perished, *Deut. viii. 20.* who were all in this manner cut off. It is easy likewise to improve it for warning against the beginnings of sin, they are like the letting forth of war, therefore leave it off before it be meddled with, for we know not what will be the end thereof. The eternal ruin of souls will be worse, and more fearful than all these desolations of a tribe. This affair of Gibeah is twice spoken of by the prophet Hosea, as the beginning of the corruption of Israel, and a pattern to all that followed, chap. ix. 9. *They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah*, and chap. x. 9. *Thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah*, and it is added, that the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not, i. e. did not at first overtake them.

C H A P. XXI.

The ruins of the tribe of Benjamin we read of in the foregoing chapter; now here we have, (1.) The lamentation which Israel made over these ruins, ver. 1—4—6—15. (2.) The provision they made for the repair of them out of the six hundred men that escaped, for whom they procured wives. (1.) Of the virgins of Jabesh-gilead, when they destroyed that city for not sending unto the general rendezvous, ver. 5—7—14. (2.) Of the daughters of Shiloh, ver. 16—25. And so this melancholy story concludes.

1. NOW the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpeh, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife. 2. And the people came to the house of God, and abode there till even before God, and lift up their voices, and wept sore, 3. And said, O LORD God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to-day one tribe lacking in Israel? 4. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people rose early, and built there an altar, and offered burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings. 5. And the children of Israel said, Who is there among all the tribes of Israel, that came not up with the congregation unto the LORD? for they had made a great oath concerning him that came not up to the LORD to Mizpeh, saying, He shall surely be put to death. 6. And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day: 7. How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing we have sworn by the LORD, that we will not give them of our daughters to wives? 8. ¶ And they said, What one is there of the tribes of Israel, that came not up to Mizpeh to the LORD? And behold, there came none to the camp from Jabesh-gilead to the assembly. 9. For the people were numbered; and behold, there were none of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead there. 10. And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded them, saying Go, and smite the inhabitants of

of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children. 11. And this is the thing that ye shall do, ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lain by a man. 12. And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead, four hundred young virgins that had known no man by lying with any male: and they brought them unto the camp to Shiloh which is in the land of Canaan. 13. And the whole congregation sent some to speak to the children of Benjamin that were in the rock Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them. 14. And Benjamin came again at that time; and they gave them wives which they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead: and yet so they sufficed them not. 15. And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

We may observe in these verses,

1. The mighty zeal which the Israelites had expressed against the wickedness of the men of Gibeah, as it was countenanced by the tribe of Benjamin. Occasion is here given to mention two instances of their zeal on this occasion, which we did not meet with before.

(1.) While the general convention of the states was in gathering together, and was waiting for a full house before they would proceed, they bound themselves with the great execration, which they called the Cherem, utterly to destroy all those cities that should not send in their representatives, and their quota of men upon this occasion; 'or, had sentenced them to that curse who should thus refuse, *ver. 5.* for they would look upon such refusals as having no indignation at the crime committed, no concern for the securing of the nation from God's judgments by the administration of justice, nor any regard to the authority of a common consent, by which they were summoned to meet.

(2.) When they were met, and had heard the cause, they made another solemn oath, that none of all the thousands of Israel, then present, nor any of those whom they represented, (not intending to bind their posterity) should, if they could help it, marry a daughter to a Benjamite, *ver. 1.* This was made an article of the war, not with a design to extirpate the tribe, but because in general they would treat them, who were then actors and abettors of this villany, in all respects as they treated the devoted nations of Canaan, whom they were not only obliged to destroy, but with whom they were forbidden to marry; and because in particular they judged them unworthy to match with a daughter of Israel, that had been so very barbarous and abusive to one of the tender sex, than which nothing could be done more base and villanous, nor a more certain indication, even of a mind perfectly lost to all honour and virtue. We may suppose the Levite's sending the mangled pieces of his wife's body to the several tribes, helped very much to inspire them with all this fury, and much more than a bare narrative of the fact, though never so well attested would have done. So much doth the eye affect the heart.

2. The mighty concern which the Israelites did express for the destruction of the tribe of Benjamin when it was done. The tide of their anger at Benjamin's crime did not run so high and so strong before, but the tide of their grief for Benjamin's destruction ran as high and as strong after. They repented for Benjamin their brother, *ver. 6—15.* They did not repent of their zeal against the sin, there is a holy indignation against sin, the fruit of godly sorrow, which is to *salvation not to be repented of*, *2 Cor. vii. 10, 11.* But they repented of the sad consequences of what they had done, that they had carried the matter further than was either just or necessary; it had been enough to destroy all they found in arms, they needed not to have cut off the husbandmen and shepherds, the women and children. Note, (1.) There may be over-doing in well-doing. Great care must be taken in the government of our zeal, lest that which seemed supernatural in its causes, prove unnatural in its effects. That is no good divinity which swallows up humanity. Many a war is ill ended which was well begun. (2.) Even necessary justice is to be done with compassion. God doth not punish with delight, nor should men. (3.) Strong passions make work for repentance. What we say and do in a heat, our calmer thoughts commonly wish undone again. (4.) In a civil war (according to the usage of the Romans) no victories ought to be celebrated with triumphs, because whichsoever side gets, the community loses, as here *there is a tribe cut off from Israel.* What the better is the body for one member's crushing another?

Now how did they express their concern?

(1.) By their grief for the breach that was made, they came to the house of God, for thither they brought all their doubts, all their counsels, all their cares, and all their sorrows. There was to be heard on this occasion, not the voice of joy and praise, but only that of lamentation, and mourning, and woe. They *lift up their voices and wept sore*, *ver. 2.* not so much for the forty-thousand which they had lost, those would not be so much missed out of the eleven tribes, but for the entire destruction of one whole tribe; for this was the complaint they poured out before God, *ver. 3.* *There is one tribe lacking.* God had taken care of every tribe, their number twelve was that which they were known by, every tribe had its station appointed in the camp, and his stone in the high-priest's breast-plate, every tribe had his blessings, both from Jacob and Moses, and it would be an intolerable reproach to them, if they should drop any out of this illustrious jury, and lose one of the twelve; especially Benjamin, the youngest, who was particularly dear to Jacob their common ancestor, and whom all the rest ought to have been in a particular manner tender of. Benjamin is not, what then will become of Jacob? Benjamin become a Benoni? the son of the right hand, a son of sorrow! In this trouble they built an altar, not in competition, but in communion with the appointed altar at the door of the tabernacle, which was not large enough to contain all the sacrifices they designed; for they offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, to give thanks for their victory. Yet to atone for their own folly in the pursuit of it, and to implore the divine favour in their present strait, every thing that grieves us should bring us to God.

(2.) By their amicable treaty with the poor distressed refugees that were hid in the rock Rimmon, to whom they sent an act of indemnity, assuring them upon the public faith, that they would now no longer treat them as enemies, but receive them as brethren, *ver. 13.* The falling out of friends should thus be the renewing of friendship. Even those that have sinned, if at length they repent, must be *forgiven and comforted*, *2 Cor. ii. 7.*

(3.) By the care they took to provide wives for them, that their tribe might be built up again, and the ruins of it repaired. Had the men of Israel fought themselves, they would have been secretly pleased with the extinguishing of the families of Benjamin, because then the land allotted to them would escheat to the rest of the tribes (*ob defectum sanguinis*) for want

of heirs, and be easily seized for want of occupants; but those have not the spirit of Israelites, who aim to raise themselves upon the ruins of their neighbours. They were so far from any design of this kind, that all heads are at work to find out ways and means for the rebuilding of this tribe. All the women and children of Benjamin were slain; they had sworn not to marry their daughters to any of them, it was against the divine law that they should match with the Canaanites, to oblige them to that, would be in effect to bid them *go serve other gods.*

What must they do then for wives for them? While the poor distressed Benjamites that were hid in the rock, feared their brethren were contriving to ruin them, they were at the same time upon a project to prefer them; and it was this:

1. There was a piece of necessary justice to be done upon the city of Jabesh-Gilead, which belonged to the tribe of Gad, on the other side Jordan. It was found upon looking over the muster-roll which was taken, *chap. xx. 2.* that none appeared from that city upon the general summons, *ver. 8, 9.* and it was then resolved, before it appeared who were absent, that whatever city of Israel should be guilty of contempt of the public authority or interest, that city should be an anathema; Jabesh-Gilead lies under that severe sentence, which might by no means be dispensed with. They that had spared the Canaanites in many places, who were devoted to destruction by the divine command, could not find in their hearts to spare their brethren that were devoted by their own curie. Why did they not now send men to root the Jebusites out of Jerusalem, to avoid whom the poor Levite had been forced to go to Gibeah, *chap. xix. 11, 12.* Men are commonly more zealous to support their own authority than God's. A detachment is therefore sent of twelve thousand men to execute the sentence upon Jabesh-Gilead: having found, that when the whole body of the army went against Gibeah, the people were thought too many for God to deliver them into their hands, on this expedition they sent but a few, *ver. 10.* Their commission is to put all to the sword, men, women, and children, *ver. 11.* according to that law, *Lev. xxvii. 29.* *Whatsoever is devoted of men, by these that have power to do it, shall surely be put to death.*

2. An expedient is from hence formed for providing the Benjamites with wives. When Moses sent the same number of men to avenge the Lord of Midian, the same order was given, as here, that all married women should be slain with their husbands as one with them, but that the virgins should be saved alive. *Numb. xxxi. 17, 18.* That precedent was sufficient to support the distinction here made between a wife and a virgin, *ver. 11, 12.* Four hundred virgins that were marriageable, were found in Jabesh-Gilead, and these were married to so many of the surviving Benjamites, *ver. 14.* Their fathers were not present when the vow was made, not to marry with Benjamites, so that they were not under any colour of obligation by it; and besides being a prey taken in war, they were at the disposal of the conquerors. Perhaps, the alliance now contracted between Benjamin and Jabesh-Gilead, made Saul, who was a Benjamite, the more concerned for that place, *1 Sam. xi. 4.* though then inhabited by new families.

16. ¶ Then the elders of the congregation said, How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing the women are destroyed out of Benjamin? 17. And they said, *There must be an inheritance for them that be escaped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not destroyed out of Israel.* 18. Howbeit, we may not give them wives of our daughters: for the children of Israel have sworn, saying, *Cursed be he that giveth a wife to Benjamin.* 19. Then they said, Behold, *there is a feast of the LORD in Shiloh yearly in a place which is on the north-side of Beth-el, on the east-side of the high-way that goeth up from Beth-el to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah.* 20. Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go, and lie in wait in the vineyards: 21. And see, and behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin. 22. And it shall be, when their fathers or their brethren come unto us to complain, that we will say unto them; Be favourable unto them for our sakes: because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war: for ye did not give unto them at this time, *that ye should be guilty.* 23. And the children of Benjamin did so, and took *them* wives according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught: and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them. 24. And the children of Israel departed thence at that time, every man to his tribe, and to his family, and they went out from thence every man to his inheritance. 25. In those days *there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*

We have here the method that was taken to provide the two hundred Benjamites that remained with wives. And though the tribe was reduced to a small number, they were only in care to provide each man with one wife; not with more, under pretence of multiplying them the faster. They may not bestow their daughters upon them, but to save their oath, and yet marry some of their daughters to them, they put them into a way of taking them by surprise, and marrying them, which should be ratified by their parents' consent *ex post facto.* The less consideration is used before the making of a vow, the more commonly there is need of after for the keeping of it.

1. That which gave an opportunity for the doing of this, was a public ball at Shiloh, in the fields, at which all the young ladies of that city, and the parts adjacent, that were so disposed, met to dance, in honour of a feast of the Lord then observed, probably the feast of tabernacles, *ver. 19.* For that feast (Bishop Patrick saith) was the only season wherein the Jewish virgins were allowed to dance; and that not only so much for their own recreation, as to express their holy joy, as David when he danced before the ark; otherwise the present melancholy posture of public affairs would have made dancing unseasonable, as *Isa. xxii. 12, 13.* The dancing was very modest and chaste, it was not mixed dancing; no men danced with these daughters of Shiloh, nor did any married women so far forget their gravity

as to join with them. However, their dancing thus in public, made them an easy prey to those that had a design upon them. Whence Bishop Hall observes, that the *ambushes of evil spirits carry away many souls from dancing to a fearful desolation.*

2. The elders of Israel gave authority to the Benjamites to do this, to lie in wait in the vineyards, which surrounded the green they used to dance on, and, when they were in the midst of their sport, to come upon them, and catch every man a wife for himself, and carry them straight away to their own country, *ver. 20, 21.* They knew none of their own daughters would be there, so that they could not be said to give them, for they knew nothing of the matter. A sorry *subterfuge* is better than none, to save the breaking of an oath: it were much better to be cautious in making vows, that there be not occasion afterwards, as there was here, to say before the angel, that it was an error. Here was a very preposterous way of match-making, when both the mutual affection of the young people and the consent of the parents must be presumed to come after; the case was extraordinary, and may by no means be drawn into a precedent. Over-hasty marriages often occasion a leisurely repentance; and what comfort can be expected by a match made either by force or fraud? The virgins of Jabesh-Gilead were taken out of the midst of blood and slaughter, but these of Shiloh, out of the midst of mirth and joy; the former had reason to be thankful that they had their lives for a prey, and the latter, it is to be hoped, have no cause to complain, after a while, when they found themselves matched not to men of broken and desperate fortunes, as they seemed to be, who were newly fetched out of a cave, but to men of the best and largest estates in the nation, as they must needs be, when the lot of the whole tribe of Benjamin, which consisted of forty-five thousand six hundred men, *Numb. xxvi. 41.* came to be divided again among six hundred, who had all by survivorship.

3. They undertook to pacify the fathers of these young women; as to

the infringement of their paternal authority, they would easily forgive it, when they considered to what fair estates their daughters were matched, and what mothers in Israel they were likely to be; but the oath they were bound by, not to give their daughters to Benjamites, might perhaps stick with some of them, whose consciences were tender, and as to that this might satisfy them; (1.) That the necessity was urgent, *ver. 22. We referred not to each man his wife,* owning now that they did ill to destroy all the women, and desirous to atone for their too rigorous construction of their vow to destroy them, by the most favourable construction of their vow not to match with them. And therefore for our sakes, who were too severe, let them keep what they have forgot. For, (2.) In strictness it was not a breach of their vow; they had sworn not to give them their daughters, but they had not sworn to fetch them back if they were forcibly taken. So that if there were any fault, the elders must be responsible, not the parents. And *quod fieri non debuit factum valet.* The thing was done, and is ratified only by connivance, according to the law, *Numb. xxx. 4.*

Lastly, In the close of all we have, (1.) The settling of the tribe of Benjamin again. The few that remained, returned to the inheritance of that tribe, *ver. 23.* And soon after from among them sprang Ehud, who was famous in his generation, the second judge in Israel, *Judg. iii. 15.* (2.) The disbanding and dispersing of the army of Israel, *ver. 24.* They did not set up for a standing army, nor pretend to make any alterations or establishments in the government, but when the affair was over for which they were called together, they quietly departed in God's peace, every man to his family. Public services must not make us think ourselves above our own private affairs, and the duty of providing for our own house. (3.) A repetition of the cause of these confusions, *ver. 25.* Though God was their king, every man would be his own master, as if there were no king. Blessed be God for magistracy.

A N

E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,

Upon the BOOK of

R U T H.

This short story of the domestic affairs of one particular family, fitly follows the book of Judges, the events related here happening in the days of the Judges, and fitly goes before the books of Samuel, because in the close it introduceth David; yet the Jews in their Bibles separate it from both, and make it one of the five Megilloth, or Volumes, which they put together towards the latter end; in this order, Solomon's Song, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. It is probable Samuel was the penman of it. It relates not miracles or laws, wars or victories, or the revolutions of states, but the affliction first, and afterwards the comfort of Naomi; the conversion first, and afterwards the preferment of Ruth. Many such events have happened, which perhaps we may think as well worthy to be recorded. But these God saw fit to transcribe the knowledge of to us; and even common historians think they have liberty to choose their subject. The design of this book, is, 1. To lead to Providence; to shew us how conversant it is about our private concerns, and to teach us in them all to have an eye to it, acknowledging God in all our ways, and in all events that are concerning us. See 1 *Sam. ii. 7, 8. Psal. cxiii. 7, 8, 9.* 2. To lead to Christ, who descended from Ruth, and part of whose genealogy concludes the book, from whence it is fetched into *Mat. i.* And in the conversion of Ruth the Moabites, and the bringing of her into the pedigree of the Messiah, we have a type of the calling of the Gentiles in due time into the fellowship of Christ Jesus our Lord. The afflictions of Naomi and Ruth we have an account of, *chap. i.* Instances of their industry and humility, *chap. ii.* The bringing of them into alliance with Boaz, *chap. iii.* And their happy settlement thereby, *chap. iv.* And let us remember the scene is laid in Bethlehem, the city where our Redeemer was born.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have Naomi's afflictions. (1.) As a distressed house-keeper, forced by famine to remove into the land of Moab, *ver. 1, 2.* (2.) As a mournful widow and mother, bewailing the death of her husband, and her two sons, *ver. 3—5.* (3.) As a careful mother-in-law, desirous to be kind to her two daughters, but at a loss how to be so, when she returns to her own country, *ver. 6—13.* Orpah she parts with in sorrow, *ver. 14.* Ruth she takes with her in fear, *ver. 15—18.* (4.) As a poor woman sent back to the place of her first settlement; to be supported by the kindness of her friends, *ver. 19—22.* All these things were melancholy, and seemed against her, and yet all working for good.

1. NOW it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land: and a certain man of Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. 2. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, Ephraimites of Beth-lehem-judah: and they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. 3. And Eli-
No. XL.

melech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. 4. And they took them wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. 5. And Mahlon and Chilion died also, both of them: and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

The first words give all the date we have of this story. It was in the days when the judges ruled, *ver. 1.* not in those disorderly times when there was no king in Israel. But under which of the judges these things happened we are not told, and the conjectures of the learned are very uncertain. It must be towards the beginning of the judges' time, for Boaz, that married Ruth, was born of Rahab, who received the spies in Joshua's time. Some think it was in the days of Ehud, others of Deborah: the learned Bishop Patrick inclines to think it was in the days of Gideon, because in his days only we read of a famine by the Midianites' invasion, *Judges vi. 3, 4.* While the judges were ruling, some of one city, and some of another, Providence takes particular cognizance of Bethlehem, and has an eye to a King, to Messiah himself, who should descend from two Gentile mothers, Rahab and Ruth.

Here is, 1. A famine in the land; in the land of Canaan, that land flowing with milk and honey. This was one of the judgments which God had threatened to bring upon them for their sins, *Lev. xxvi. 19, 20.* He has many arrows in his quiver; in the days of the judges, they were oppressed by their enemies, and when by that judgment they were not reformed, God tried this, for when he judgeth he will overcome. When the land had rest, yet
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it had not plenty, even in Bethlehem, which signifies the house of bread, there was a scarcity. A fruitful land is turned into barrenness, to correct and restrain the luxury and wantonness of them that dwell therein.

2. An account of one particular family distressed in the famine, it is that of Elimelech. His name signifies, *my God a king*, agreeable to the state of Israel when the judges ruled, for the Lord was their king, and comfortable to him and his family in their affliction, that God was theirs, and that he reigns for ever. His wife was Naomi, which signifies *my amiable or pleasant one*. But his sons' names were Mahlon and Chilion, *sickness and consumption*, perhaps because weakly children, and not likely to be long lived. Such are the products of our pleasant things, weak and infirm, fading and dying.

3. The remove of this family from Bethlehem into the country of Moab, on the other side Jordan for subsistence, because of the famine, *ver. 1, 2*. It seems there was plenty in the country of Moab, when there was scarcity of bread in the land of Israel. Common gifts of Providence are often bestowed in greater plenty upon those that are strangers to God, than upon those that know and worship him. *Moab is at ease from his youth*, while *Israel is emptied from vessel to vessel*, *Jer. xlviii. 11*. not because God loves Moabites better, but because they have *their portion in this life*. Thither Elimelech goes not to settle for ever, but to sojourn for a time, during the dearth, as Abraham, on the like occasion, went into Egypt; and Isaac into the land of the Philistines. Now here, 1. Elimelech's care to provide for his family, and his taking his wife and children with him, were without doubt commendable, *If any provide not for his own, he hath denied the faith*, *1 Tim. v. 8*. When he was in his straits, he did not over-run his house, go seek his fortune himself, and leave his wife and children to shift for their own maintenance, but, as became a tender husband and a loving father, where he went he took them with him, not as the ostrich, *Job xxxix. 16*. But, 2. I see not how his removal into the country of Moab upon this occasion could be justified. Abraham and Isaac were only sojourners in Canaan, and it was agreeable to their condition to sit, but the seed of Israel were now fixed, and ought not to remove into the territories of the heathen. What reason had Elimelech to go more than any of his neighbours? if by any ill husbandry he had wasted his patrimony, and sold his land, or mortgaged it, (as it should seem, *chap. iv. 3, 4*.) which brought him into a more necessitous condition than others, the law of God had obliged his neighbours to relieve him, *Lev. xxv. 35*. but that was not his case, for he went out full, *ver. 1*. By those who tarried at home it appears that the famine was not so extreme, but that there was sufficient to keep life and soul together; and his charge was but small, only two sons. But if he could not be content with the short allowance that his neighbours took up with, and *in the day of famine could not be satisfied*, unless he kept as plentiful a table as he had done formerly; if he could not live in hope that there would come years of plenty again in due time, or could not with patience wait for those years, it was his fault, and he did by it dishonour God, and the good land he had given them, *weaken the hands of his brethren*, with whom he should have been willing to take his lot, and set an ill example to others. If all should do as he did, Canaan would be dispeopled. Note, It is an evidence of a discontented, distrustful, unstable spirit to be sick of the place in which God hath set us, and to be for leaving it presently, whenever we may meet with any uneasiness or inconvenience in it. It is folly to think of out-running that cross which, being laid in our way, we ought to take up. It is our wisdom to make the best of that which is, for it is seldom that changing our place is mending it. Or if he would remove, why to the country of Moab? if he had made enquiry, it is probable he would have found plenty in some of the tribes of Israel, those, for instance, on the other side Jordan that bordered on the land of Moab; if he had that zeal for God and his worship, and that affection for his brethren which became an Israelite, he would not have persuaded himself so easily to go to sojourn among Moabites.

4. The marriage of his two sons to two of the daughters of Moab after his death, *ver. 4*. All agree this was ill done; the Chaldee faith, *they transgressed the decree of the word of the Lord in taking strange wives*. If they would not stay unmarried till their return to the land of Israel, they were not so far off but that they might have fetched them wives from thence. Little did Elimelech think when he went to sojourn in Moab, that ever his sons should thus join in affinity with Moabites. But those that bring young people into bad acquaintance, and take them out of the way of public ordinances, though they may think them well principled, and armed against temptation, know not what they do, nor *what will be the end thereof*. It doth not appear that these women they married were profelyted to the Jewish religion, for Orpah is said to return to her gods, *ver. 15*, the gods of Moab were her's still. It is a groundless tradition of the Jews, that Ruth was the daughter of Eglon king of Moab, yet the Chaldee paraphrast inserts it; but this and their other traditions which he inserts likewise, cannot consist, that Boaz, who married Ruth, was the same with Ibzan, who judged Israel two hundred years after Eglon's death, *Judg. xiii*.

5. The death of Elimelech and his two sons, and the disconsolate condition Naomi was thereby reduced to. Her husband died, *ver. 3*, and her two sons, *ver. 5*, soon after their marriage, and the Chaldee faith, *their days were shortened*, because they transgressed the law in marrying strange wives. See here, (1.) That wherever we go we cannot out-run death, whose fatal arrows fly in all places. (2.) That we cannot expect to prosper when we go out of the way of our duty. *He that will save his life by any indirect courses shall lose it*. (3.) That death when it comes into a family, often makes breach upon breach. One is taken away, to prepare another to follow soon after; one is taken away, and that affliction is not duly improved, and therefore God sends another of the same kind. When Naomi had lost her husband, she took so much the more complacency, and put so much the more confidence in her sons, under the shadow of those surviving comforts she thinks she shall live among the heathen; and exceeding glad she was of these gourds; but behold they wither presently; *green and growing up in the morning, cut down and dried up before night*; buried soon after they were married, for neither of them left any children. So uncertain and transient are all our enjoyments here. It is therefore our wisdom to make sure of those comforts that will be made sure, and which death cannot rob us of. But how desolate was the condition, and how disconsolate the spirit of poor Naomi, when the woman was left of her two sons and her husband? When these two things come upon her in a moment, come upon her in their perfection, by whom shall she be comforted? *loss of children and widowhood*, *Isa. xlvii. 9—11*. 19. It is God alone who has wherewithal to comfort those that are cast down.

6. ¶ Then she arose with her daughters-in-law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab, how that the LORD had visited his people, in giving them bread. 7. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her: and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. 8. And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law,

Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. 9. The LORD grant you that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them: and they lift up their voice, and wept. 10. And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. 11. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? 12. Turn again, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have an husband: if I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bare sons: 13. Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters: for it grieveth me much for your sakes, that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me. 14. And they lifted up their voice and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her. 15. And she said, Behold thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law. 16. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go: and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: 17. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me. 18. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

See here, 1. The good affection Naomi bore to the land of Israel, *ver. 6*. Though she could not stay in it while the famine lasted, she would not stay out of it when the famine ceased: though the country of Moab had afforded her shelter and supply in a time of need, yet she did not intend it should be her rest for ever, no land should be that but the holy land, in which the sanctuary of God was, of which he had said, *This is my rest for ever*. Observe, 1. God at last returned in mercy to his people, for though he contend long, he will not contend always. As the judgment of oppression, under which they often groaned in the time of the judges, still came to an end, after a while, when God had raised them up a deliverer; so here the judgment of famine: at length God graciously visited his people in giving them bread. Plenty is God's gift, and it is his visitation that by bread, the staff of life, holds our souls in life. Though this mercy be the more sensible when it comes after famine, yet if we have constantly enjoyed it, and never knew what famine meant, we are not to think it the less valuable. 2. Naomi then returned in duty to her people. She had often enquired of their state, what harvests they had, and how the markets went, and still the tidings were discouraging, but at last, like the prophet's servant who looked seven times and saw no sign of rain, at length discerned a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, which soon overpread the heavens; so Naomi at last has good news brought her of plenty in Bethlehem, and then she can think of no other but returning thither again. Here new alliances in the country of Moab could not make her forget her relation to the land of Israel. Note, though there be a reason for our being in bad places, yet when the reason ceaseth, we must by no means continue in them. Forced absence from God's ordinances, and forced presence with wicked people, is a great affliction, but when the force ceaseth, and it is continued of choice, then it becomes a great sin. It should seem she began to think of returning immediately upon the death of her two sons. (2.) Because she looked upon that affliction to be a judgment upon her family for lingering in the country of Moab, and hearing this to be the voice of the rod, and of him that appointed it, she obeys and returns. Had she returned upon the death of her husband, perhaps she might have saved the life of her sons, but when God judgeth he will overcome, and if one affliction prevail not to awaken us to the light and sense of sin and duty, another shall. When death comes into a family, it ought to be improved for the reforming what is amiss in the family: when relations are taken away from us, we are put upon enquiry, whether in some instance or other we are not out of the way of our duty, that we may return to it. God calls our sins to remembrance when he slays a son, *1 Kings xvii. 18*. And if thus he hedge up our way with thorns, it is that he may oblige us to say, *we will go and return to our first husband*, as Naomi here to her country, *Ezra. ii. 7*. (2.) Because the land of Moab was now become a melancholy place to her. It is with little pleasure that she can breathe in that air in which her husband and sons had expired; or go on that ground in which they lay buried or out of her sight, but not out of her thoughts; now she will go to Canaan again. Thus God takes away from us the comforts we stay ourselves too much upon, and solace ourselves too much in here in the land of our sojourning, that we may think more of our home in the other world, and by faith and hope may hasten towards it. Earth is embittered to us, that heaven may be endeared.

2. The good affection which her daughters-in-law, and one of them especially, bore to her, and her generous return of their good affection.

1. They were both so kind as to accompany her, some part of the way at least, when she returned towards the land of Judah. Her two daughters-in-law did not go about to persuade her to continue in the land of Moab, but if she was resolved to go home, would pay her all possible civility and respect at parting, and this was one instance of it, they would bring her on her way, at least to the utmost limits of their country, and help her to carry her luggage as far as they went, for it doth not appear that she had any servant to attend her, *ver. 7*. By this we see both that Naomi, as became an Israelite, had been very kind and obliging to them, and had won their love, in which she is an example to all mothers-in-law; and that Orpah and Ruth had a just sense of her kindness, for they were willing to return it thus far. It was a sign they had dwelt together in unity, though they were dead by whom the relation between them came. Though they retained an affection to the gods of Moab, *ver. 15*, and Naomi was still faithful to the God of Israel, yet that was no hindrance to either side from love and kindness, and all the good offices that the relation required. Mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law are too often at variance, *Matt. x. 35*, and therefore it is the more commendable, if they live in love; let all in that relation aim at the praise of doing so.

2. When they had gone a little way with her, Naomi, with a great deal of affection, urged them to go back, *ver. 8, 9. Return each to her mother's house.* When they were dislodged by a sad providence from the house of their husbands, it was a mercy to them that they had their parents yet living, that they had their houses to go to, where they might be welcome and easy, and were not turned out to the wide world. Naomi suggests, that their own mothers would be more agreeable to them than a mother-in-law, especially when their own mothers had houses, and their mother-in-law was not sure she had a place to lay her head in she could call her own.

She dismisseth them, (1.) *With commendation*; that is a debt owing to those who have carried themselves well in any relation, they ought to have the praise of it, *you have dealt kindly with the dead, and with me, i. e. you were good wives to your husbands that are gone, and you have been good daughters to me, and not wanting to your duty in either relation.* Note, When we and our relations are parting, by death or otherwise, it is very comfortable, if we have both their testimony, and the testimony of our own consciences for us, that while we were together we carefully endeavoured to do our duty to the relation. This will help to allay the bitterness of parting; and while we are together we should labour so to carry ourselves, as that when we part, we may not have cause to reflect with regret upon our miscarriages in the relation. (2.) *With prayer.* It is very proper for friends when they part, to part with prayer. She sends them home with her blessing, and the blessing of a mother-in-law is not to be slighted. She twice mentions the name Jehovah, Israel's God, and the only true God, in this blessing, that she might direct her daughters to look up to him as the alone fountain of all good. To him she prays in general, that he would recompense to them the kindness they had shewed to her and hers. It may be expected and prayed for in faith, that God will deal kindly with those that have dealt kindly with their relations. *He that watereth, shall be watered also himself.* And in particular, that they might be happy in marrying again. *The Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband.* Note, 1. It is very fit, that according to the apostle's direction, (1 Tim. v. 14.) the younger women, and he speaks there of young widows, should marry, bear children, and guide the house. And those that have approved themselves good wives, it is a pity but they should again be blessed with good husbands, especially those that, like these widows, have no children. 2. The married state is a state of rest, such rest as this world affords, rest in the house of a husband, more than can be expected in the house of a mother or a mother-in-law. 3. This rest is God's gift. If any content and satisfaction be found in our outward condition, God must be acknowledged in it. There are those that are unequally yoked, that find little rest even in the house of a husband. Their affliction ought to make those the more thankful to whom the relation is comfortable; yet let God be the rest of the soul, and no perfect rest thought of on this side heaven. (3.) She dismissed them with great affection; she kissed them; wished she had somewhat better to give them, but silver and gold she has none: however, this parting kiss shall be the seal of such a true friendship, as (though she never see them more) she will, while she lives, retain the grateful remembrance of. If relations must part, let them thus part in love, that they may (if they never meet again in this world) meet in the world of everlasting love.

3. The two young widows could not think of parting with their good mother-in-law, so much had the good conversation of that pious Israelite won upon them; they not only lift up their voice and wept, as loth to part, but they protested a resolution to adhere to her, *ver. 10. Surely we will return with thee unto thy people, and take our lot with thee.* It is a rare instance of affection to a mother-in-law, and an evidence that they had for her sake conceived a good opinion of the people of Israel. Even Orpah, who afterwards went back to her gods, now seemed resolved to go forward with Naomi. The sad ceremony of parting, and the tears shed on that occasion, drew from her this protestation, but it did not hold. Strong passions without a settled judgment commonly produce weak resolutions.

4. Naomi sets herself to dissuade them from going along with her, *ver. 11, 12, 13.* If she had had any sons in Canaan, or any near kinsmen, who she could expect might marry the widows, to *raise up seed* to them that were gone, and to redeem the mortgaged estate of the family, it might have been some encouragement to them to hope for a comfortable settlement at Bethlehem. But she had no sons, nor could she think of any near kinsman, likely to do the kinsman's part, and therefore argues, that she was never likely to have any sons to be husbands for them, for she was too old to have a husband, it became her age to think of dying and going out of the world, not of marrying and beginning the world again. Or if she had a husband, she could not expect to have children, nor if she had sons, could she think that these young widows would stay unmarried, till her sons that should yet be born would grow up to be marriageable. Yet this was not all, she could not only not propose to herself to marry them like themselves, but she knew not how to maintain them like themselves: The greatest grievance of that poor condition to which she was reduced, was, that she was not in a capacity to do for them as she would. *It grieveth me more for your sakes, than for my own, that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.* Observe, 1. She judges herself chiefly aimed at in the affliction; that God's quarrel was principally with her, *the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.* I am the sinner, it is with me that God has a controversy, it is with me that he is contending, I take it to myself; this will become us when we are under affliction; though many others share in the trouble; yet we must hear the voice of the rod, as if it spoke only against us; and to us, not billeting the rebukes of it at other people's houses, but taking them to ourselves. 2. She laments most the trouble that redounded to them from it. She was the sinner, but they were the sufferers, *it grieveth me much for your sakes.* A gracious generous spirit can better bear its own burden; than it can bear to see that a grievance to others, or others any way drawn into trouble by it. Naomi could easier want herself, than see her daughters want. Therefore turn again, my daughters, for alas, I am in no capacity to do you any kindness.

But did Naomi do well, thus to discourage her daughters from going with her, when by taking them with her she might save them from the idolatry of Moab, and bring them to the faith and worship of the God of Israel? Naomi no doubt desired to do that. But, (1.) If they did come with her, she would not have them to come upon her account; those that take upon them a profession of religion, only in complaisance to their relations, to oblige their friends, or for company sake, will be converts of small value and of short continuance. (2.) If they did come with her, she would have them to make it their deliberate choice, and to sit down first and count the cost, as it concerns those to do that may take up a profession of religion. It is good for us to be told the worst; our Saviour took this course with him, that in a pang of zeal spoke that big word, *Master, I will follow thee wheresoever thou goest*; Come, come, saith Christ, canst thou fare as I fare? *The Son of man hath not where to lay his head*; know that, and then consider whether thou canst find in thy heart to take thy lot with him, *Matt. viii. 29.* Thus Naomi deals with her daughters-in-law. Thoughts

ripened into resolves by serious consideration, are likely to be kept always in the imagination of the heart, whereas what is soon ripe is soon rotten.

5. Orpah was easily persuaded to yield to her own corrupt inclination, and to go back to her country, her kindred and her father's house, now when she stood fair for an effectual call from it. They both *lift up their voice and wept again, ver. 14.* being much affected with the tender things that Naomi had said, but it had a different effect upon them; to Orpah it was a favour of death unto death; the representation Naomi had made of the inconveniences they must count upon, if they went forward to Canaan, sent her back to the country of Moab, and served her for an excuse of her apostacy. But, on the contrary, it strengthened Ruth's resolution, and her good affection to Naomi, with whose wisdom and goodness she was never so charmed as she was upon this occasion; thus to her it was a favour of life unto life. (1.) Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, *i. e. took dear leave of her, bid her farewell for ever, without any purpose to follow her hereafter, as he that said, he would follow Christ when he had buried his father, or bidden them farewell that were at home.* Orpah's kiss shewed she had an affection for Naomi, and was loth to part from her, yet she did not love her well enough to quit her country for her sake. Thus, many have a value and affection for Christ, and yet come short of salvation by him, because they cannot find in their hearts to forsake other things for him. They love him, and yet leave him because they do not love him enough, but love other things better. Thus the young man that went away from Christ went away sorrowful, *Matt. xix. 22.* But, (2.) *Ruth clave unto her.* Whether when she came from home she was resolved to go forward with her or no, doth not appear; perhaps she was before determined what to do, out of a sincere affection to the God of Israel, and to his law, which by the good instructions of Naomi she had some knowledge of.

6. Naomi persuades Ruth to go back, urging as a further inducement her sister's example, *ver. 15. Thy sister-in-law is gone back to her people, and therefore of course gone back to her gods*; for whatever she might have done whilst she lived with her mother-in-law, it would be next to impossible for her to shew any respect to the God of Israel, when she went to live among the worshippers of Chemosh. Those that forsake the communion of saints, and return to the people of Moab, will certainly break off their communion with God and embrace the idols of Moab. Now, *return thou after thy sister, i. e. if ever thou wilt return, return now.* This is the greatest trial of thy constancy; stand this trial, and thou art mine for ever. Such offences as that of Orpah's revolt must needs come, that they which are perfect and sincere may be made manifest, as Ruth was upon this occasion.

7. Ruth puts an end to the debate by a most solemn profession of her immoveable resolution never to forsake her, nor to return to her own country, and her old relations again, *ver. 16, 17.* Nothing could be said more fine, more brave, than this; she seems to have had another spirit, and another speech now her sister was gone, and it is an instance of the grace of God, inclining the soul to the resolute choice of the better part. *Draw me thus, and we will run after thee.* Her mother's dissuasions made her the more resolute; as when Joshua said to the people, *ye cannot serve the Lord, they said it with the more vehemence, nay, but we will.*

1. She begs of her mother-in-law to say no more against her going. *Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee,* for all thy intreaties now cannot shake that resolution which thy instructions formerly have wrought in me; and therefore let me hear no more of them. Note, It is a great vexation and uneasiness for those that are resolved for God and religion to be tempted and solicited to alter their resolution. They that would not think of it, would not hear of it. *Intreat me not.* The margin reads it, *Be not against me.* Note, We are to reckon those against us, and really our enemies, that would hinder us in our way to the heavenly Canaan. Our relations they may be, but they cannot be our friends, that would dissuade us from and discourage us in the service of God and the work of religion.

2. She is very particular in her resolution to cleave to her, and never to forsake her; and she speaks the language of one resolved for God and heaven. She is so in love, not with her mother's beauty or riches, or gaiety; all those were withered and gone; but with her wisdom, virtue, and grace, which remained with her, even in her present poor and melancholy condition, that she resolves to stick to her. (1.) She will travel with her; *whither thou goest, I will go,* though to a country I never saw, and which I have been trained up in a low and ill opinion of; though far from my own country, yet with thee every road shall be pleasant. (2.) She will dwell with her, *where thou lodgest I will lodge,* though it be in a cottage, nay, though it be no better a lodging than Jacob had, when he had the stones for his pillow. Where thou fettest up thy staff I will set up mine, be it where it will. (3.) She will twist interests with her, *thy people shall be my people.* From Naomi's character she concludes certainly that great nation was a wife and an understanding people, judges of them all by her good mother, who, wherever she went, was a credit to her country, (as all those should study to be, who profess relation to the better country, that is, the heavenly) and therefore she will think herself happy if she may be reckoned one of them. The people shall be mine to associate with, to be conformable to, and to be concerned for. (4.) She will join in religion with her; thus she determined to be hers, *if I see ad aras, Thy God shall be my God,* and farewell to all the gods of Moab, which are vanity and a lie. I will adore the God of Israel, the only living and true God, trust in him alone, serve him, and in every thing be ruled by him; this is to take the Lord for our God. (5.) She will gladly die in the same bed; *where thou diest I will die*: she takes it for granted they must both die; that in all probability Naomi, as the elder, would die first, and resolves to continue in the same house, if it might be, till her days also were fulfilled; intimating likewise a desire to partake of her happiness in death; she wishes to die in the same place, in token of her dying after the same manner; let me die the death of righteous Naomi, and let my last end be like hers. (6.) She will desire to be buried in the same grave, and to lay her bones by hers: *There will I be buried,* not desiring to have so much as her dead body carried back to the country of Moab, in token of any remaining kindness for it; but Naomi and she having joined souls, she desires they may mingle dust, in hopes of rising together, and being together for ever in the other world.

3. She backs her resolution to adhere to Naomi with a solemn oath, *The Lord do so to me, and more also,* (which was an ancient form of imprecation) *if aught but death part thee and me.* An oath for confirmation was an end of this strife, and would leave a lasting obligation upon her never to forsake that good way she was now making choice of. (1.) It is implied, that death would separate between them for a time. She could promise to die, and be buried in the same place, but not at the same time; it might so happen that the might die first, and that would part them. Note, Death parts those whom nothing else will part. A dying hour is a parting hour, and should be so thought of by us, and prepared for. (2.) It is resolved that nothing else shall part them; nor any kindness from her own family and people, nor any hope of preferment among them; nor any unkindness from Israel, nor the fear of poverty and disgrace among them. No, I will never leave thee.

Now this is a pattern of a resolute convert to God and religion; thus must we be at a point. (1.) We must take the Lord for our God. This God is my God for ever and ever; I have avouched him for mine. (2.) When we take God for our God, we must take his people for our people in all conditions, though they be a poor despised people, yet if they be his, they must be ours. (3.) Having cast in our lot among them, we must be willing to take our lot with them, and to fare as they fare. Submit to the same yoke, and draw in it faithfully, take up the same cross, and carry it cheerfully, go where God would have us to go, though it should be into banishment, and lodge where he will have us to lodge, though it be in a prison; die where he will have us die, and lay our bones in the graves of the upright, who enter into peace, and rest in their beds, though they be but the graves of the common people. (4.) We must resolve to continue and persevere, and herein our adherence to Christ must be closer than that of Ruth to Naomi; she resolved, that nothing but death should separate them, but we must resolve that death itself shall not separate us from our duty to Christ, and then we may be sure that death itself shall not separate us from our happiness in Christ. (5.) We must bind our souls with a bond never to break these pious resolutions, and swear unto the Lord that we will cleave to him. Fast bind, fast find. He that means honestly, doth not startle at assurances.

Lastly, Naomi was hereby silenced, ver. 18. When she saw that Ruth was stedfastly minded to go with her, which was the very thing she aimed at in all that she had said, to make her of a stedfast mind in going with her, when she saw that she had gained her point, she was very well satisfied, and left off speaking to her. She could desire no more than that solemn protestation Ruth had just now made. See the power of resolution, how it puts temptation to silence. Those that are unresolved, and go in religious ways without a stedfast mind, tempt the tempter, and stand like a door half-jar, which invites a thief; but resolution shuts and bolts the door, resists the devil, and forces him to flee.

The Chaldee paraphrase thus relates the debate between Naomi and Ruth. Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, for I will be a proselyte; Naomi said, We are commanded to keep sabbaths and good days, on which we may not travel above two thousand cubits (a sabbath-day's journey); well, saith Ruth, Whither thou goest, I will go. Naomi said, We are commanded not to carry all night with Gentiles; well, saith Ruth, Where thou lodgest I will lodge. Naomi said, We are commanded to keep six hundred and thirteen precepts; well, saith Ruth, Whate'er thy people keep, I will keep, for they shall be my people: Naomi said, We are forbidden to worship any strange god; well, saith Ruth, Thy God shall be my God. Naomi said, We have four sorts of deaths for malefactors, stoning, burning, strangling, and slaying with the sword; well, saith Ruth, Where thou diest I will die. We have, saith Naomi, houses of sepulchre, and there, saith Ruth, will I be buried.

19. ¶ So they two went until they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi? 20. And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. 21. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me? 22. So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab; and they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley-harvest.

Naomi and Ruth, after many a weary step (the fatigue of the journey, we may suppose, being somewhat relieved by the good instructions. Naomi gave to her proselyte, and the good discourse they had together) came at last to Beth-lehem. And they came very seasonably in the beginning of barley-harvest, which was the first of their harvests, that of wheat following after. Now Naomi's own eyes might convince her of the truth of what she had heard in the country of Moab, that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread, and Ruth might see this good land in its best clothes: And now they had an opportunity to provide for winter. Our times are in God's hand; both the events, and the time of them.

Notice is here taken,

1. Of the discomposure of the neighbours upon this occasion, ver. 19. All the city was moved about them. Her old acquaintance gathered about her, to enquire concerning her state, and to bid her welcome to Beth-lehem again. Or, perhaps they were moved about her, lest she should be a charge to the town, she looked so bare. By this it appears, that she had formerly lived in good fashion, else there had not been so much notice taken of her. If those that have been in a high and prosperous condition break or fall into poverty or disgrace, their fall is the more remarkable; and they said, Is this Naomi? The women of the town said it, for the word is feminine. They with whom she had formerly been intimate, were surprised to see her in this condition; she was so much broken and altered with her afflictions that they could scarce believe their own eyes, nor think that this was the same person whom they had formerly seen, so fresh, and fair, and gay, Is this Naomi? So unlike is the rose when it is withered, to what it is when it was blooming. What a poor figure doth Naomi make now, to what she made in her prosperity! If any asked this question in contempt, upbraiding her with her miseries: is this she that could not be content to fare as her neighbours did, but must ramble to a strange country, see what she has got by it? their temper was very base and fordid; nothing more barbarous than to triumph over those that are fallen: but we may suppose most asked it in compassion and commiseration; is this she that lived so plentifully, and kept so good a house, and was so charitable to the poor, how is the gold become dim? They that had seen the magnificence of the first temple wept, when they saw the meanness of the second; so these here. Note, Afflictions will make great and surprising changes in a little time. When we see how sickness and old age alter people, change their countenance and temper; we may think of what the Bethlehemites said, Is this Naomi? one would not take it to be the same person. God by his grace fits us for all such changes, especially the great change!

2. Of the composure of Naomi's spirit: If some upbraided her with her poverty, she was not moved against them, as she would have been, if she had been poor and proud, but with a great deal of pious patience; bore that and all the other melancholy effects of her affliction, ver. 20, 21. Call me not Naomi, call me Mara; &c. Naomi signifies pleasant or amiable, but all my pleasant things are laid waste; call me Mara, bitter, or bitterness, for I am now a woman of a sorrowful spirit. Thus doth she bring her mind to her condition, which we all ought to do, when our condition is not in every thing to our mind. Observe,

1. The change of her state, and how that is described, with a pious regard to the divine providence, and without any passionate murmurings or complaints. (1.) It was a very sad and melancholy change. She went out full, so she thought herself when she had her husband with her and two sons. Much of the fulness of our comfort in this world ariseth from agreeable relations: But she now came home again empty, a widow, and childless, and probably had sold her goods, and of all the effects she took with her, brought home no more than the clothes on her back. So uncertain is all that which we call fulness in the creature, 1 Sam. ii. 5. Even in the fulness of that sufficiency we may be in straits. But there is a fulness, a spiritual and divine fulness, which we can never be emptied of; a good part which shall not be taken from those that have it. (2.) She acknowledgeth the hand of God, his mighty hand in the affliction. It is the Lord that has brought me home again empty; it is the Almighty that hath afflicted me. Note, Nothing conduceth more to satisfy a gracious soul under an affliction, than the consideration of the hand of God in it. It is the Lord, 1 Sam. iii. 18, Job i. 21. Especially to consider, that he that afflicts us is Shaddai, the Almighty, with whom it is folly to contend, and to whom it is our duty and interest to submit. It is that name of God by which he enters into covenant with his people, I am God Almighty, God all-sufficient, Gen. xlvii. 1. He afflicts as a God in covenant, and his all-sufficiency may be our support and supply under all our afflictions. He that empties us of the creature, knows how to fill us with himself. (3.) She speaks very feelingly of the impression which the affliction had made upon her. He has dealt very bitterly with me. The cup of affliction is a bitter cup, and even that which afterwards yields the peevable fruits of righteousness, yet for the present is not joyous but grievous, Heb. xii. 11. Job complains, thou writest bitter things against me, Job xiii. 26. (4.) She owns the affliction to come from God as a controversy. The Lord hath testified against me. Note, When God corrects us, he testifies against us, and contends with us, Job x. 17. intimating, that he is displeased with us. Every rod has a voice, the voice of a witness.

2. The compliance of her spirit with this change. Call me not Naomi, for I am no more pleasant, either to myself or to my friends, but call me Mara, a name more agreeable to my present state. Many that are debased and impoverished, yet affect to be called by the empty names and titles of honour they have formerly enjoyed; Naomi did not so: Her humility matters not a glorious name in a dejected state; if God deal bitter with her, she accommodates herself to the dispensation, and is willing to be called Mara, bitter. Note, It well becomes us to have our hearts humbled under humbling providences. When our condition is brought down, our spirits should be brought down with it. And then our troubles are sanctified to us, when we thus comport with them; for it is not an affliction itself, but an affliction rightly borne that doth us good. Perdidisti tot mala, si nondum misera esse didicisti. Sen. ad. Helv. Tribulation works patience.

C H A P. II.

Sure there is scarce any chapter in all the sacred history that floops so low as this, to take cognizance of so mean a person as Ruth, a poor Moabitish widow, so mean an action as her gleaning corn in a neighbour's field, and the minute circumstances thereof. But all this was in order to her being grafted into the line of Christ, and taken in among his ancestors, that she might be a figure of the espousals of the Gentile church to Christ, Isa. liv. 1. And this makes the story remarkable; and many of the passages of it are instructive, and very improvable. Here is, 1. Ruth's humility and industry in gleaning corn, Providence directing her to Boaz's field, ver. 1—3. 2. The great favour which Boaz shewed to her in many instances, ver. 4—16. 3. The return of Ruth to her mother-in-law, ver. 18—23.

1. **A**ND Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. 2. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him, in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. 3. And she went, and came and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

Naomi had now gained a settlement in Beth-lehem among her old friends, and here we have an account,

1. Of a rich kinsman, Boaz, a mighty man of wealth, ver. 1. The Chaldee reads it, mighty in the law; if he were both, it was a most rare and excellent conjunction, to be mighty in wealth, and mighty in the scriptures too; those that are so are mighty indeed. He was grandson of Nahshon, that was prince of the tribe of Judah in the wilderness, and son of Salmon, probably a younger son, by Rahab, the harlot of Jericho; he carries might in his name, Boaz, in him is strength; and he was of the family of Elimelech, that family which was now reduced and brought so low. Observe, (1.) Boaz, though a rich and great man had poor relations; every branch of the tree is not a top-branch. Let not those that are great in the world, be ashamed to own their kindred that are mean and despised, lest they be found therein proud, scornful, and unnatural. (2.) Naomi, though a poor contemptible widow, had rich relations, whom yet she neither boasted of nor was burdensome to, nor expected any thing from when she was returned to Beth-lehem in distress. Those that have rich relations, while they themselves are poor, ought to know it is the wise providence of God that makes the difference, in which we ought to acquiesce; and that to be proud of our relation to such is a great sin, and to trust to it is great folly.

2. Of her poor daughter-in-law, Ruth. (1.) Her condition was very low and poor; which was a great trial to the faith and constancy of a young proselyte. The Bethlehemites had done well, if they had invited Naomi and her daughter-in-law first to one good house, and then to another: it would have been a great support to an aged widow, and a great encouragement to a new convert; but instead of tasting the dainties of Canaan, they have no way of getting necessary food, but by gleaning corn, and otherwise, for aught appears, they might have starved. Note, God has chosen the poor of this world, and poor they are like to be, for though God hath chosen them, commonly men overlook them. (2.) Her character in this condition was very good, ver. 2. She said to Naomi, not, let me now go to the land of Moab again, for there is no living here, here there is want, but in my father's house there is bread enough. No, she is not mindful of the country from which she came out, otherwise she had now a fair occasion to return; the God

of Israel shall be her God, and though he slay her, yet will he trust in him, and never forsake him. But her request is, *let me go to the field, and glean ears of corn.* Those that are well born, and have been well brought up, know not what straits they may be reduced to, nor what mean employments they may be obliged to get their bread by, *Lam. iv. 5.* When the case is thus melancholy, let Ruth be remembered, who is a great example.

1. Of humility. When Providence had made her poor, she did not say, to glean, which is in effect to beg, I am ashamed, but cheerfully stoops to the meanhess of her circumstances, and accommodates herself to her lot. High spirits can easier starve than stoop, Ruth was none of those. She doth not tell her mother, she was never brought to live upon crumbs. Though she was not brought up to it, she is brought down to it, and is not uneasy at it. Nay, it is her own motion, not her mother's injunction; humility is one of the brightest ornaments of youth, and one of the best omens. Before Ruth's honour was this humility. Observe, how humbly she speaks of herself, in her expectations of leave to glean; let me glean after him, *in whose sight I shall find grace.* She doth not say, I will go glean, and sure nobody will deny me the liberty, but I will go glean, in hopes some body will allow me the liberty. Note, Poor people must not demand kindness as a debt, but humbly ask it, and take it as a favour, though in never so small a matter. It becomes the poor to use entreaties.

2. Of industry. She doth not say to her mother-in-law, let me now go a visiting to the ladies of the town, or go a walking in the fields to take the air, and be merry, I cannot sit all day moping with you: no, it is not sport, but business, that her heart is upon, *let me go and glean ears of corn,* and that will turn to some good account. She was one of those virtuous women that love not to eat the bread of idleness, but loved to take pains. This is an example to young people, let them learn betimes to labour, and what their hand finds to do, do it with their might; a disposition to diligence bodes well, both for this world and the other. Love not sleep, love not sport, love not fauntering; but love business. It is also an example to poor people to work for their living, and not to beg that which they are able to earn. We must not be shy of any honest employment, though it be mean, *from whence?* Sin is a thing below us, but we must not think any thing else so that Providence calls us to.

3. Of regard to her mother: though she was but her mother-in-law, and though being loosed by death from the law of her husband, she might easily suppose herself therefore loosed from the law of her husband's mother, yet she is dutifully observant of her. She will not go out without letting her know, and asking her leave. This respect young people ought to shew to their parents and governors, it is part of the honour due to them. She did not say, mother, if you will go with me, I will go glean, but do you sit at home, and take your ease, and I will go abroad, and take pains. *Juniors ad labores.* Let young people take advice from the aged, but not put them upon toil.

4. Of dependence upon Providence; intimated in that, I will glean after him, *in whose sight I shall find grace.* She knows not which way to go, nor whom to enquire for, but will trust Providence to raise her up some friend or other that will be kind to her. Let us always keep up good thoughts of the divine Providence, and believe, that while we do well, that will do well for us.

And it did well for Ruth, for when she went out alone, without guide or companion to glean, her hap was to light on the field of Boaz, *ver. 3.* To her it seemed casual, she knew not whose field it was, nor had she any reason for going to that more than any other, and therefore it is said to be her hap, but Providence directed her steps to this field. Note, God wisely orders small events, and those that seem altogether contingent serve his own glory, and the good of his people. Many a great affair is brought about by a little turn, which seemed fortuitous to us, but was directed by Providence with design.

4. ¶ And, behold, Boaz came from Beth-lehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you: and they answered him, The LORD bless thee. 5. Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? 6. And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel, that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: 7. And she said, I pray you, let me glean, and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: So she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house. 8. Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearst thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens. 9. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men, that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. 10. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? 11. And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me; all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. 12. The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. 13. Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens. 14. And Boaz said unto her, At meal-time come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left. 15. And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men,

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saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not. 16. And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.

Now Boaz himself appears, and a great deal of decency there appears in his carriage, both towards his own servants, and towards this poor stranger.

1. Towards his own servants, and those that were employed for him, in reaping and gathering his corn. Harvest-time is busy time, many hands must then be at work: Boaz that had much, being a mighty man of wealth, had much to do, and consequently many to work under him, and to live upon him; *as goods are increased, they are increased that eat them, and what good has the owner thereof, save the beholding of them with his eyes?* Boaz is here an example of a good master.

(1.) He had a servant that was set over the reapers, *ver. 6.* In great families, it is requisite there should be one to oversee the rest of the servants, and appoint to each their portion, both of work and meat. Ministers are such servants in God's house, and it is requisite that they be both wise and faithful, and shew their Lord all things, as he here, *ver. 6.*

(2.) Yet he came himself to his reapers, to see how the work went forward, if he found any thing amiss to rectify it, and to give further orders what should be done. This was both for his own interest, he that wholly leaves his business to others, will have it done by the halves: the master's eye makes a fat horse: and it was also for the encouragement of his servants, who would go on the more cheerfully in their work, when their master countenanced them so far as to make them a visit. Masters that live at ease should think with tenderness of those that toil for them, and bear the burden and heat of the day.

(3.) Kind and pious salutations were interchanged between Boaz and his reapers. He said to them, *the Lord be with you,* and they replied, *the Lord bless thee,* *ver. 4.* Hereby they expressed, (1.) Their mutual respect to each other, he to them as good servants, and they to him as a good master. When he came to them, he did not fall a chiding them; as if he came only to find fault, and exercise his authority; but he prayed for them, *the Lord be with you,* prosper you, and give you health and strength, and preserve you from any disaster: nor did they as soon as ever he was out of hearing fall a cursing him, as some ill-natured servants that hate their master's eye, but they returned his courtesy, *the Lord bless thee,* and make our labours serviceable to thy prosperity! Things are likely to go on well in a house where there is such good-will as this between masters and servants. (2.) Their joint dependence upon the divine Providence; they expressed their kindness to each other, by praying one for another. They shew not only their courtesy, but their piety, and an acknowledgment, that all good comes from the presence and blessing of God, which therefore we should value and desire above any thing else, both for ourselves and others. Let us from hence learn to use, (1.) Courteous salutations, as expressions of a sincere good-will to our friends. (2.) Pious ejaculations, lifting up our hearts to God for his favour, in such short prayers as these. Only we must take heed that they do not degenerate into a formality, lest in them we take the name of the Lord our God in vain; but if we be serious in them, we may in them keep up our communion with God, and fetch in mercy and grace from him. It appears to have been the usual custom, thus to wish reapers good speed, *Psalm. cxxix. 7, 8.*

(4.) He took an account from his reapers concerning a stranger he met within the field; and gave necessary orders concerning her, that they should not touch her, *ver. 9.* nor reproach her, *ver. 15.* Masters must take care not only that they do no hurt themselves, but that they suffer not their servants and those under them to do hurt. He also ordered them to be kind to her, and let fall some of the handfuls on purpose for her; though it is fit masters should restrain and rebuke their servants for wastefulness, yet they should not tie them up from being charitable, but give them allowance for that, with prudent directions.

2. Boaz was very kind to Ruth, and shewed her a great deal of favour, induced to it by the account he had of her, and what he observed concerning her, God also inclining his heart to countenance her. Coming among his reapers, he observed this stranger among them, and got intelligence from his steward who she was, and here is a very particular account of what passed concerning her.

1. The steward gave to Boaz a very fair account of her, proper to recommend her to his favour, *ver. 6, 7.* (1.) That she was a stranger, and therefore one of those that by the law of God were to gather the gleanings of the harvest, *Lev. xix. 9, 10.* She is the Moabitish damsel. (2.) That she was allied to his family; she came back with Naomi, the wife of Elimelech, a kinsman of Boaz. (3.) That she was a proselyte, for she came out of the country of Moab to settle in the land of Israel. (4.) That she was very modest, and had not gleaned till she had asked leave. (5.) That she was very industrious, and had continued close to her work from morning even until now. And the poor that are industrious and willing to take pains are fit to be encouraged. Now in the heat of the day she tarried a little in the house or booth, that was set up in the field for shelter from the weather, to repose herself, and some suggest, that it is probable she retired for her devotion. But she soon came back to her work, and except that little intermission, has been close at it all day, though it was not what she had been used to. Servants should be just in the characters and reports they give to their masters, and take heed they do not misrepresent any person, nor without cause discourage their master's charity.

2. Boaz was hereupon extremely civil to her in divers instances: (1.) He ordered her to attend his reapers in every field they gathered in, and not to glean in another field, for she should not need to go any where else to mend herself, *ver. 8.* Abide here fast by my maidens, for those of her own sex were the fittest company for her. (2.) He charged all his servants to be very tender of her and respectful to her, who, no doubt, would be so to one whom they saw their master kind to. She was a stranger, and it is probable, her language, dress, and mien, differed much from theirs, but he charged them that they should not in any thing affront her or be abusive to her, as rude servants are too apt to be to strangers. (3.) He bid her welcome to the entertainment he had provided for his own servants. He ordered her, not only to drink of the water which was drawn for them, for that seems to be the liquor he means, *ver. 9.* drawn from the famous well of Bethlehem, which was by the gate, the water of which David longed for, *2 Sam. xxiii. 15.* But at meal-time to come eat of their bread, *ver. 14.* yea, and she should be welcome to their sauce too, *come dip thy morsel in the vinegar,* to make it savoury, for God allows us, not only nourishing, but relishing food, not for necessity only, but for delight. And for encouragement to her, and direction to the servants, he himself happening to be present when the reapers sat down to meat, reached her parched corn to eat. It is no disparagement to the finest hand to be reached forth to the needy, (*Prov. xxxi. 20.*) and to be employed in serving the poor. Observe, Boaz was not scanty in his provision for his reapers, but sent them so much more than enough for themselves as would be entertainment for a stranger. Thus there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth.

creafeth. (4.) He commended her for her dutiful respects to her mother-in-law, which, though he did not know her by sight, yet he had heard of, *ver. 11. It has been fully shewed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law.* Note, Those that do well ought to have the praise of it. But that which especially he commended her for, was, that she had left her own country, and was become a profelyte to the Jewish religion, for so the Chaldee expounds it, thou art come to be profelyted, and to dwell among a people which thou knowest not. Those that leave all to embrace the true religion are worthy of double honour. (5.) He prayed for her, *ver. 12. The Lord recompense thy work.* Her strong affection to the commonwealth of Israel, to which she was by birth an alien, was such a work of the divine grace in her, as would certainly be crowned with a full reward by him under whose wing she was come to trust. Note, Those that by faith come under the wings of the divine grace, and have a full complacency and confidence in that grace, may be sure of a full recompense of reward for their so doing. From this expression the Jews described a profelyte to be one that is gathered under the wings of the divine majesty. Lastly, he encouraged her to go on in her gleaning, and did not offer to take her off from that; for the greatest kindness we can do our poor relations is to assist and encourage their industry. Boaz ordered his servants to let her glean among the sheaves, where other gleaners were not allowed to come, and not to reproach her, *ver. 15.* All this shews Boaz to be a man of a generous spirit, and one, that, according to the law, considered the heart of a stranger.

3. Ruth received his favours with a great deal of humility and gratitude, and carried herself with as much decency in her place, as he did in his, but little thinking that she should shortly be the mistress of that field she was now gleaning in. (1.) She paid all possible respect to him, and gave him honour, according to the usage of the country, *ver. 10. She fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground.* Note, Good breeding is a great ornament to religion, and we must render honour to whom honour is due. (2.) She humbly owned herself unworthy of his favours, *I am a stranger,* *ver. 10.* and not like one of thy handmaids, *ver. 13.* not so well dressed, nor so well taught, not so neat, nor so handy. Note, It well becomes us all to think meanly of ourselves, and to take notice of that in ourselves which is diminishing, esteeming others better than ourselves. (3.) She gratefully acknowledged his kindness to her though it was no great expence to him, nor much more than what he was obliged to by the divine law, yet she magnifies and admires it, *why have I found grace in thine eyes?* *ver. 10.* She begs the continuance of his good-will, *let me find favour in thy sight,* *ver. 13.* and owns, that what he had said had been a cordial to her, *thou hast comforted me, for that thou hast spoken friendly to me.* Those that are great, and in high places, know not how much good they may do to their inferiors with a kind look, or by speaking friendly to them; and so small an expence, one would think, they should not grudge, when it shall be put upon the score of their charity. (4.) When Boaz gave her her dinner with his reapers, she only eat so much as would suffice her, and left the rest; and presently rose up to glean, *ver. 14, 15.* She did not, under pretence either of her want, or of her labour, eat more than was convenient for her, nor so much as to disfit her for her work in the afternoon; temperance is a friend to industry; and we must eat and drink to strengthen us for business, not to indispose us for it.

17. So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley. 18. ¶ And she took it up, and went into the city: and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved, after she was sufficed. 19. And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to day, is Boaz. 20. And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen. 21. And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest. 22. And Naomi said unto Ruth, her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field. 23. So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean, unto the end of barley-harvest, and of wheat-harvest; and dwelt with her mother-in-law.

Here, 1. Ruth finishes her day's work, *ver. 17.* (1.) She took care not to lose time, for she gleaned until even. We must not be weary of well-doing, because in due season we shall reap. She did not make an excuse to sit still, or go home till the evening; let us work the works of him that sent us while it is day. She scarce used, much less did she abuse the kindness of Boaz, for though he ordered his servants to leave handfuls for her, she continued to glean the scattered ears. (2.) She took care not to lose what she had gathered, but threshed it herself, that she might the easier carry it home, and might have it ready for use. The slothful man robbeth not that which he took in hunting, and so loseth the benefit of it, but the substance of a diligent man is precious, *Prov. xii. 27.* Ruth had gathered it ear by ear, but when she had put it altogether, it was an ephah of barley, about four pecks. Many a little makes a great deal. It is an encouragement to industry that in all labour, even that of gleaning, there is profit, but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury. When she had got her corn into as little compass as she could, she took it up herself, and carried it into the city, though had she asked them, it is likely, some of Boaz's servants would have done that for her. We should study to be as little as possible troublesome to those that are kind to us. She did not think it either too hard or too mean a service to carry her corn herself into the city, but was rather pleased with what she had got by her own industry, and careful to secure it: and let us thus take care that we lose not those things which we have wrought, which we have gained, *2 John 8.*

2. She paid her respect to her mother-in-law; went straight home to her, and did not go to jangle with Boaz's servants; shewed her what she had gleaned, that she might see she had not been idle.

1. She entertained her with what she had left of the good dinner Boaz had given her. She gave to her that she had reserved, after she was sufficed, *ver. 18.* which refers to *ver. 14.* If she had any thing better than other, her mother should have part with her. Thus having shewed industry abroad, she shewed piety at home; so children's maintaining their parents is called, *1 Tim. v. 4.* and it is part of the honour due to them by the fifth commandment, *Matt. xv. 6.*

2. She gave her an account of her day's work, and how a kind Providence had favoured her in it, which made it very comfortable to her; for the gleanings that a righteous man hath, are better than the harvests of many wicked, *Psal. xxxvii. 16.*

1. Naomi asked her where she had been. *Where hast thou gleaned to day?* Note, Parents should take care to enquire into the ways of their children, how, and where, and in what company they spend their time. This may prevent many extravagancies which children, left to themselves, run into, by which they bring both themselves and their parents to shame. If we are not our brethren's, yet sure we are our children's keepers: and we know what a son Adonijah proved that had never been chidden. Parents should examine their children, not to frighten or discourage them so as to make them hate home, or tempt them to tell a lie, but to commend them if they have done well, and with mildness to reprove and caution them, if they have done otherwise. It is a good question for us to ask ourselves in the close of every day, *where have I gleaned to day?* What improvements have I made in knowledge and grace? what have I done or got, that will turn to a good account?

2. Ruth gave a particular account of the kindness she had received from Boaz, *ver. 19.* and the hopes she had of further kindness from him, he having ordered her to attend his servants throughout all the harvest, *ver. 21.* Note, Children should look upon themselves as accountable to their parents, and to those that are over them; and not to think it a disparagement to them to be examined, but let them do that which is good, and they shall have praise of the same. Ruth told her mother what kindness Boaz had shewed her, that she might take some occasion or another to acknowledge it, and return him thanks; but she did not tell her how Boaz had commended her, *ver. 11.* Humility teacheth us not only not to praise ourselves, but not to be forward to publish others' praises of us.

3. We are here told what Naomi said to it. (1.) She prayed heartily for him that had been her daughter's benefactor, even before she knew who it was, *ver. 19. Blessed be he,* whoever he was, *that did take knowledge of thee;* shooting the arrow of a prayer at a venture. But more particularly, when she was told who it was, *ver. 20. Blessed be he of the Lord.* Note, The poor must pray for those that are kind and liberal to them, and thus requite them, when they are not capable of making them any other requital. Let the loans of the poor bless those that refresh them, *Job xxix. 13.—xxxi. 20.* And he that hears the cries of the poor against their oppressors, *Exod. xxii. 27.* it may be hoped, will hear the prayers of the poor for their benefactors. She now remembered the former kindnesses Boaz had shewed to her husband and sons, and joins those to this; he has not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. If we generously shew kindness even to those that seem to have forgotten our former favours, perhaps it may help to revive the remembrance, even of them, which seem buried.

(2.) She acquainted Ruth with the relation their family was in to Boaz. The man is near of kin to us; it should seem she had been so long in Moab, that she had forgot her kindred in the land of Israel, till by this providence, God brought it to her mind. At least, she had not told Ruth of it, though it might have been some encouragement to a young profelyte. Unlike to humble Naomi are many, who, though fallen into decay themselves, are continually bragging of their great relations. Nay, Observe the chain of thought here, and in it a chain of providences, bringing about what was designed concerning Ruth: Ruth names Boaz as one that had been kind to her; Naomi bethinks herself who that should be, and presently recollects herself, the man is near of kin to us, now I hear his name, I remember him very well. This thought brings in another; he is our next kinsman; our Goel that has the right to redeem our estate that was mortgaged, and therefore from him we may expect farther kindness. This is the likeliest man in all Bethlehem to set us up. Thus God brings things to our mind, sometimes of a sudden, that prove to have a wonderful tendency to our good.

(3.) She appointed Ruth to continue her attendance in the fields of Boaz, *ver. 22. Let them not meet thee in any other field,* for that will be construed a contempt of his courtesy. Our blessed Saviour is our God, it is he that has right to redeem, if we expect to receive benefit by him, let us closely adhere to him, and his fields, and his family; let us not go to the world and its fields, for that which is to be had with him only, and which he has encouraged us to expect from him. Has the Lord dealt bountifully with us? let us not be found in any other field, nor seek for happiness and satisfaction in the creature. Tradesmen take it ill, if those that are in their books go to another shop. We lose divine favours if we slight them. Some think Naomi gave her daughter-in-law a tacit rebuke, she had spoke, *ver. 21. of keeping fast by the young men;* nay, saith Naomi, *ver. 22. It is good that thou go out with his maidens,* they are fitter company for thee than the young men. But they are too critical; Ruth spake of the young men, because they were the principal labourers, and to them Boaz had given directions concerning her: and Naomi takes it for granted, while she attended the young men, her society would be with the maidens, as was fit.

Ruth dutifully observed her mother's directions; she continued to glean, to the end not only of barley-harvest, but of the wheat-harvest which followed it, that she might gather food in harvest to serve for winter, *Prov. vi. 6, 7.* She also kept fast by the maidens of Boaz, with whom she afterwards cultivated an acquaintance, which might do her service, *ver. 23.* But she constantly came to her mother at night in due time, as became a virtuous woman, that was for working days and not for merry nights. And when the harvest was ended, (as Bishop Patrick expounds it) she did not gad abroad, but kept her old mother company at home. Dinah went out to see the daughters of the land, and we know what a disgrace her vanity ended in; Ruth kept at home, and helped to maintain her mother, and went out on no other errand but to get provision for her, and we shall find afterwards what preferment her humility and industry ended in. *Seest thou a man diligent in his business?* Honour is before him.

C H A P. III.

We found it very easy in the former chapter to applaud the decency of Ruth's carriage, and to shew what good use we may make of the account given us of it; but in this chapter we shall have much ado to vindicate it, and to clear it from the imputation of indecency, and to save it from having an ill use made of it: but the goodness of those times was such, as saves this here from being ill done, and yet the badness of these times is such, as that it will not justify any now in doing the like. Here is, (1.) The directions Naomi gave to her daughter-in-law, how to claim Boaz for her husband, *ver. 3, 4.*

(2.)

- (2.) *Ruth's punctual observance of those directions*, ver. 6, 7. (3.) *The kind and honourable treatment Boaz gave her*, ver. 8—15. (4.) *Her return to her mother-in-law*, ver. 16—18.

1. **T**HEN Naomi her mother-in-law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? 2. And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to-night in the threshing-floor. 3. Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. 4. And it shall be when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do. 5. And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me, I will do.

Here, 1. Naomi's care for her daughter's comfort is without doubt very commendable, and is recorded for imitation. She had no thoughts of marrying herself, chap. i. 12. But, though she that was old had resolved upon a perpetual widowhood, yet she was far from the thoughts of confining her daughter-in-law to it that was young. Age must not make itself a standard to youth. On the contrary, she is full of contrivance how to get her well married. Her wisdom projected that for her daughter, which her daughter's modesty forbade her to project for herself, ver. 1. This she did, (1.) In justice to the dead, to raise up seed to them that were gone, and so to preserve the family from being extinct. (2.) In kindness and gratitude to her daughter-in-law, who had carried herself very dutifully and respectfully to her. *My daughter*, (saith she, looking upon her in all respects as her own) *shall I not seek rest for thee?* i. e. a settlement in the married state, shall I not get thee a good husband, *that it may be well with thee*, i. e. that thou mayest live plentifully and pleasantly, and not spend all thy days in this mean and melancholy condition we now live in. Note, 1. A married state is or should be a state of rest to young people; wandering affections are then fixed, and the heart must be at rest: it is rest in the house of a husband, and in his heart, chap. i. 9. Those are giddy indeed, that marriage doth not compose. 2. That which should be desired and designed by those that enter into the married state is, *that it may be well with them*; in order to which it is necessary that they choose well, otherwise instead of being a rest to them it may prove the greatest uneasiness. Parents in disposing of their children must have this in their eye, *that it may be well with them*. And be it always remembered, that *that is best for us, which is best for our souls*. 3. It is the duty of parents to seek this rest for their children, and to do all that is fit for them to do, in due time, in order to it. And the more dutiful and respectful they are to them, though they can the worse spare them, yet they should the rather prefer them, and the better.

2. The course she took in order to her daughter's preferment was very odd, and looks suspicious. If there were any thing ill in it, the fault must lie upon Naomi, who put her daughter upon it, and who knew or should know the laws and usages of Israel better than Ruth. (1.) It was true, that Boaz being near of kin to the deceased, and (for aught Naomi knew to the contrary) the nearest of all now alive, was obliged by the divine law to marry the widow of Mahlon, who was the eldest son of Elimelech, and was dead without issue, ver. 2. *Is not Boaz of our kindred?* and therefore bound in conscience to take care of our affairs; why should we not mind him of his duty? This may encourage us to lay ourselves by faith at the feet of Christ, that he is our near kinsman, having taken our nature upon him, he is *bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh*. (2.) It was a convenient time to mind him of it, now he had got so much acquaintance with Ruth, by her constant attendance on his reapers during the whole harvest which was now ended; and he also, by the kindness he had shewed to Ruth in lesser matters, had encouraged Naomi to hope that he would not be unkind, much less unjust, in this greater. And she thought it was a good opportunity to apply to him, when he made a winnowing-feast at his threshing floor, ver. 2. then and there completing the joy of the harvest, and treating his workmen like a kind master, *he winnoweth barley to-night*, i. e. he makes his entertainment to-night; as Nabal and Absalom had feasts at their sheep-shearings, so Boaz at his winnowing. (3.) Naomi thought Ruth the most proper person to do it herself; and perhaps it was the usage in that country, that in this case the woman should make the demand, so much is intimated by the Law, Deut. xxv. 7, 8, 9. Naomi therefore orders her daughter-in-law to make herself clean and neat, not to make herself fine, ver. 3. *Wash thyself and anoint thee*, not paint thee, as Jezebel, put on thy raiment, but not the attire of the harlot, and go down to the floor, whither, it is probable, she was invited to the supper there made; but she must not make herself known, i. e. not make her errand known, (otherwise she herself could not but be very well known among Boaz's reapers) till the company was dispersed, and Boaz was retired. And upon this occasion, she would have an easier access to him in private than she could have at his own house. And thus far was well enough. But, (4.) Her coming to lie down at his feet, when he was asleep in his bed, had such an appearance of evil, was such an approach towards it, and might have been such an occasion of it, that we know not well how to justify it. Many expositors think it unjustifiable, particularly the excellent Mr. Pool, we must not do evil that good may come. It is dangerous bringing the spark and the tinder together, for how great a matter may a little fire kindle. All agree, that it is not to be drawn into a precedent, neither our laws nor our times are the same that were then, yet here I am willing to make the best of it. If Boaz was, as they presumed, the next kinsman, she was his wife before God (as we say) and there needed but little ceremony to complete the nuptials; and Naomi did not intend that Ruth should approach to him any otherwise than as his wife; she knew Boaz to be not only an old man, (she would not have trusted to that alone, in venturing her daughter-in-law so near him) but a grave sober man, a virtuous and religious man, and one that feared God. She knew Ruth to be a modest woman, *chaste and a keeper at home*, Tit. ii. 5. The Israelites had indeed been once debauched by the daughters of Moab, Numb. xxv. 1. But this Moabitess was none of those daughters. Naomi herself designed nothing but what was honest and honourable, and her charity (which believeth all things, and hopeth all things) banished and forbade all suspicion, that either Boaz or Ruth would offer any thing, but what was likewise honest and honourable. If what she advised had been then as indecent and immodest (according to the usage of the country), as it seems now to us, we cannot think that if Naomi had so little virtue (which yet we have no reason to suspect) that she should have had so little wisdom as to put her daughter upon it, since that alone might have marred the match, and have alienated

the affections of so grave and good a man as Boaz from her. We must therefore conclude the thing did not look so ill then as it doth now. Naomi referred her daughter-in-law to Boaz for further directions. When she had thus made her claim, Boaz, who was more learned in the laws, would tell her what she must do. Thus we must lay ourselves at the feet of our Redeemer, to receive from him our doom, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6.

We may be sure, if Ruth had apprehended any evil in that which her mother advised her to, she was a woman of too much virtue, and too much sense, to promise as she did, ver. 5. *All that thou sayest unto me I will do*. Thus must the younger submit to the elder, and to their grave and prudent counsel, when they have nothing worth speaking of to object against it.

6. ¶ And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law bade her. 7. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down. 8. ¶ And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet. 9. ¶ And he said, who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid, for thou art a near kinsman. 10. And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end, than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followest not young men, whether poor or rich. 11. And now, my daughter, fear not, I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know, that thou art a virtuous woman. 12. And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I. 13. Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part; but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the LORD liveth: lie down until the morning.

Here is, 1. Boaz's good management of his common affairs, it is probable, according to the common usage, (1.) When his servants winnowed he was with them, and had his eye upon them, to prevent not only their stealing any of his corn, he had no reason to fear that, but their waste of it through carelessness in the winnowing of it. Masters may sustain great losses by servants that are heedless, though they be honest, which is a reason why men should be diligent to know the state of their own flocks, and look well to them. (2.) When he had more than ordinary work to be done, he treated his servants with extraordinaries, and for their encouragement did eat and drink with them. It well becomes those that are rich and great to be generous to, and yet to be familiar with, those that are under them, and employed for them. (3.) When Boaz had supped with his workmen, and been a while pleasant with them, he went to bed in due time, so early, that by midnight he had his first sleep, (ver. 8.) and thus he would be fit for his business betimes next morning. All that are good husbands will keep good hours, and not indulge themselves or their families in unreasonable mirth. The Chaldee paraphrase tells us, ver. 7. that Boaz eat and drank, and his heart was good, (and so the Hebrew word is) and he blessed the name of the Lord, who had heard his prayers and taken away the famine from the land of Israel. So he went sober to bed, his heart was in a good frame, and not overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness. And he did not go to bed without prayer. Now he had eaten, and was full, he blessed the Lord; and now he was going to rest, committed himself to the divine protection; it was well he did, for he had an unusual temptation before him, though he knew not of it. (4.) He had his bed or couch laid at the end of the heap of corn; not because he had set his heart upon it, nor only that he might tend and keep it safe from thieves, but it was too late to go home to the city, and here he would be near his work, and ready for it next morning, and he would shew, that he was not nice or curious in his lodging, neither took state, nor consulted his ease, but was, like his father Jacob, a plain man, that, when there was occasion, could make his bed in a barn, and, if need were, sleep contentedly in the straw.

2. Ruth's good assurance in the management of her affair. She observed her mother's orders, went and laid down, not by his side, but overcross his bed's feet, in her clothes, and kept awake, waiting for an opportunity to tell her errand. When he waked in the night, and perceived there was somebody at his feet, and enquired who it was, she told him her name, and then her errand, ver. 9. that she came to put herself under his protection, as the person appointed by the divine law to be her protector. *Thou art he that has a right to redeem a family and an estate from perishing*, and therefore let this ruin be under thine hand: and spread thy skirt over me, be pleased to espouse me and my cause. Thus must we by faith apply ourselves to Jesus Christ as our next kinsman that is able to redeem us, come under his wings, as we are invited, (Mat. xxiii. 37.) and beg of him to spread his skirt over us. Lord Jesus, take me into thy covenant, and under thy care: I am oppressed, undertake for me.

3. The good acceptance Ruth gained with Boaz. What she did had no ill effect, either one way or other, so that Naomi was not mistaken in her good opinion of her kinsman. He knew her demand was just and honourable, and treated her accordingly, and did not deal with his sister as with a harlot, Gen. xxxiv. 31. For (1.) He did not offer to violate her chastity, though he had all the opportunity that could be for it. The Chaldee paraphrase thus descants upon it, He subdued his concupiscence, and did not approach to her, but did as Joseph the just, who would not come near to his Egyptian mistress, and as Phaltiel the Pious, who, when Saul had given him Michal, David's wife, (1 Sam. xxv. 44.) put a sword between himself and her, that he might not touch her. Boaz knew it was not any sinful lust that brought her hither, and therefore bravely maintained both his own honour and hers. (2.) He did not put any ill construction upon what she did, did not reproach her as an impudent woman, and unfit to make an honest man a wife; she having approved herself well in his fields, and all her carriage having been modest and decent, he would not from this instance entertain the least suspicion of her character, or seem to do so; perhaps blaming himself that he had not offered the service of a kinsman to these distressed widows, and saved her this trouble, and ready to say as Judah concerning his daughter-in-law, *She is more righteous than I*.

But,

But, on the contrary, (1.) He commended her, spoke kindly to her, called her his daughter, and spoke honourably of her, as a woman of eminent virtue. She had shewed in this instance more kindness to her mother-in-law, and to the family into which she had matched, than in any instance yet. It was very kind to leave her own country, and come along with her mother to the land of Israel, to dwell with her, and help to maintain her, for this he had blessed her, *chap. ii. 11.* but now he saith, thou hast *shewed more kindness in the latter end, than in the beginning*, ver. 10. in that she consulted not her own fancy, but her husband's family, in marrying again. She received not the addresses of *young men*, (much less did she seek them) whether poor or rich, but was willing to marry as the law directed, though it were to an old man, because it was for the honour and interest of the family into which she had matched, and for which she had an entire kindness. Young people must aim in disposing of themselves not so much to please their own eye, as to please God and their parents.

(2.) He promised her marriage, ver. 11. *fear not that I will slight thee, or expose thee; no, I will do all that thou requirest*, for it is the same that the law requires, from the next of kin, and I have no reason to decline it, *for all the city of my people doth know, that thou art a virtuous woman*, ver. 11. Note, 1. Exemplary virtue ought to have its due praise, (*Phil. iv. 8.*) and it will recommend both men and women to the esteem of the wisest and best. Ruth was a poor woman, and poverty often obscures the lustre of virtues, yet Ruth's virtues, even in a mean condition, were generally taken notice of, and could not be hid; nay, her virtues took away the reproach of her poverty, if poor people be but good people, they shall have honour from God and man. Ruth had been remarkable for her humility, which paved the way to this honour; the less she proclaimed her own goodness, the more did her neighbours take notice of it. 2. In the choice of yoke-fellows, virtue should especially be regarded, known approved virtue; let religion determine the choice, and it will certainly crown the choice and make it comfortable. *Wisdom is better than gold*, and when it is said to be *good with an inheritance*, the meaning is, that an inheritance is worth little without it.

(3.) He made his promise conditional, and could not do otherwise, for it seems there was a kinsman that was nearer than he, to whom the right of redemption did belong, ver. 12. This he knew, but we may reasonably suppose Naomi (who had been long abroad, and could not be exact in the pedigree of her husband's family) was ignorant of it, otherwise she would never have sent her daughter to make her claim of Boaz. Yet he doth not bid her go herself to this other kinsman, that had been to put too great a hardship upon her. But he promiseth, (1.) That he would himself propose it to the other kinsman, and know his mind. The Hebrew word for a widow signifies, *one that is dumb*, Boaz will therefore *open his mouth for the dumb*, Prov. xxxi. 8. and will say that for this widow, which she knew not how to say for herself. (2.) That if the other kinsman related to do the kinsman's part, he would do it; would marry the widow, redeem the land, and so repair the family. This promise he backs with a solemn oath, for it was a conditional contract of marriage, ver. 13. *as the Lord liveth*. Thus keeping the matter in suspense, he bid her wait till morning. Bishop Hall thus sums up this matter in his contemplations: "Boaz, instead of touching her as a wanton, blessed her as a father, encouraged her as a friend, promiseth her as a kinsman, rewardeth her as a patron, and sends her away laden with hopes and gifts, no less chaste, more happy than she came. O admirable temperance, worthy the progenitor of him, in whose lips and heart there was no guile!"

14. ¶ And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor. 15. Also he said, Bring the veil that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and she went into the city. 16. And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her. 17. And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother-in-law. 18. Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.

We are here told,

1. How Ruth was dismissed by Boaz. It had not been safe for her to go home in the dead of the night, therefore she lay at his feet (not by his side) until morning, but as soon as ever the day broke, that she had light to go home by, she got away, before one could know another, that if she were seen, yet she might not be known to be abroad so unseasonably. She was not shy of being known to be a gleaner in the field, nor ashamed of that mark of her poverty. But she would not willingly be known to be a night-walker, for her virtue was her greatest honour, and that which she most valued.

Boaz dismissed her, (1.) With a charge to keep counsel, ver. 14. *Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor*, and lay all night so near to Boaz, for though they needed not to care much what people said of them, while they were both conscious to themselves of an unpotted purity, yet because few would have come so near the fire as they did, and not have been scorched. Had it been known, it would have occasioned suspicions in some, and reflections from others; good people would have been troubled, and ill people would have triumphed, and therefore let it not be known. Note, We must always take care, not only to keep a good conscience, but to keep a good name: either we must not do that, which, though innocent, is liable to be misinterpreted, or, if we do, we must not let it be known. We must not only avoid sin, but scandal. There was likewise a particular reason for concealment here, if this matter should take wind, it might prejudice the freedom of the other kinsman's election: And he would make this his reason for refusing Ruth, that Boaz and she had been together. (2.) He dismissed her with a good present of corn, which would be very acceptable to her poor mother at home, and an evidence for her that he had not sent her away in dislike, which Naomi might have suspected, if he had sent her away empty. He gave it her in her veil, or apron, or mantle; gave it her by measure, like a prudent corn-master, he kept an account of all he delivered out; it was six measures, i. e. six omers, as is supposed, ten of which made an ephah; whatever the measure was, it is likely he gave her as much as she could well carry, ver. 15. And the Chaldee saith, *Strength was given her from the Lord to carry*; and adds, that now it was told her by the spirit of prophecy, That from her should descend six of the most righteous men of their age, viz. David, Daniel, his three companions, and the king Messiah.

2. How she was welcomed by her mother-in-law. She asked her, *Who*

art thou, my daughter? Art thou a bride or no? Must I give thee joy? So Ruth told her how the matter stood, and where it stuck, ver. 16, 17. Whereupon her mother, (1.) Advised her to be satisfied in what was done. *Sit still, my daughter, till thou know how the matter will fall*, ver. 18. *How it is decreed in heaven*, so the Chaldee reads it, for marriages are made there. She had done all that was fit for her to do, and now she must patiently wait the issue, and not be perplexed about it. Let us learn hence to cast our care upon Providence, to follow that and attend the motions of it, composing ourselves into an expectation of the event, with a resolution to acquiesce in it, whatever it be; sometimes that proves best done for us, that is least our own doing; sit still, therefore, and see how the matter will fall, and say, Let it fall how it will, I am ready for it. (2.) She assured her that Boaz, having undertaken this matter, would approve himself a faithful careful friend, *He will not be at rest till he have finished the matter*. Though it was a busy time with him in his fields and his floor, yet having undertaken to serve his friend, he would not neglect the business. Naomi believes that Ruth has won his heart, and that therefore he will not be easy till he knows whether she be his or no. This she gives as a reason why Ruth should sit still and not perplex herself about it, that Boaz had undertaken it, and he would be sure to manage it well. Much more reason have good Christians to be careful for nothing, but cast their care on God, because he has promised to care for them: And what need we care if he do? sit still, and see how the matter will fall, for the Lord will perfect that which concerns thee, and will make it to work for good to thee, Psal. xxxvii. 4, 5. *Your strength is to sit still*, Isa. xxv. 7.

CHAPTER IV.

In this chapter we have the wedding between Boaz and Ruth, in the circumstances of which there was something uncommon, which is kept upon record, for the illustration, not only of the law concerning the marrying of a brother's widow, Deut. xxv. 5. &c. for cases help to expound laws, but of the gospel too: for from this marriage descended David, and the son of David whose espousals to the Gentile church were here typified. We are here told, (1.) How Boaz got clear of his rival, and fairly shook him off, ver. 1—8. (2.) How this marriage with Ruth was publicly solemnized, and attended with the good wishes of his neighbours, ver. 9—12. (3.) The happy issue that descended from this marriage. Obed, the grandfather of David, ver. 13—17. And so the book concludes with the pedigree of David, ver. 18—22. Perhaps it was to oblige him, that the blessed spirit directed the inserting this story in the sacred canon, he being desirous that the virtues of his grandmother, Ruth, together with her Gentile extraction, should be transmitted to posterity, and the singular providence that attended her.

1. THEN went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake, came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down. 2. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. 3. And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi that is come again out of the country of Moab selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's. 4. And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it, before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it; but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it. 5. Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. 6. ¶ And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself, for I cannot redeem it. 7. Now this was the manner in former time in Israel, concerning redeeming, and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel. 8. Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee: So he drew off his shoe.

Here, 1. Boaz calls a court immediately. It was probable he was himself one of the elders (or aldermen) of this city, for he was a mighty man of wealth, perhaps he was father of the city, and sat chief, for he seems here to have gone up to the gate, as one having authority, and not as a common person, like Job, chap. xxix. 7, &c. We cannot suppose him less than a magistrate in his city, who was grandson to Nahshon, prince of Judah; and his lying at the end of a heap of corn in the threshing-floor the night before, was not at all inconsistent in those days of plainness, with the honour of his sitting judge in the gate. But why was Boaz so hasty, why so fond of the match? Ruth was not rich, but lived upon alms, not honourable, but a poor stranger; she was never said to be beautiful, if ever she had been so, we may suppose that weeping and travelling, and grieving, had withered her lilies and roses. But that which made Boaz in love with her, and solicitous to expedite the affair, was, that all her neighbours agreed she was a virtuous woman, this set her price with him far above rubies, Prov. xxxi. 10. And therefore he thinks, if by marrying her he might do her a real kindness, he should also do himself a very great kindness; he will therefore bring it to a head presently. It was not court day, but he got ten men of the elders of the city to meet him in the town-hall over the gate, where public business used to be transacted, ver. 2. So many, it is likely, by the custom of the city, make a full court. Boaz, though a judge, would not be judge in his own cause, but desired the concurrence of other elders. Honest intentions dread not a public cognizance.

2. He summons his rival to come and hear the matter that was to be proposed to him, ver. 1. *Ho, such a one*, sit down here. He called him by his name, no doubt, but the divine historian thought not fit to record it, for

for because he refused to raise up the name of the dead, he desired not to have his name preserved to future ages in this history. Providence favoured Boaz in ordering it so, that this kinsman should come by thus opportunely, just when the matter was ready to be proposed to him. Great affairs are sometimes much furthered by small circumstances, which facilitate and expedite them.

3. He proposed to the other kinsman the redemption of Naomi's land, which, it is probable, had been mortgaged for money to buy bread with, when the famine was in the land, *ver. 3.* *Naomi has a parcel of land to sell, viz. the equity of the redemption of it out of the hands of the mortgagee, which she is willing to part with; or, as some think, it was her jointure for her life, and wanting money, for a small matter she would sell her interest to the heir at law, who was fittest to be the purchaser.* This he gives the kinsman legal notice of, *ver. 4.* that he might have the refusal of it. Whoever had it must pay for it, and Boaz might have said, my money is as good as my kinsman's, if I have a mind to it, why may not I buy it privately, since I had the first proffer of it, and say nothing to my kinsman; no, Boaz, though fond enough of the purchase, would not do so mean a thing, as to take a bargain over another man's head, that was nearer akin to it; and we are taught by his example, to be not only just and honest, but fair and honourable in all our dealings, and to do nothing which we are unwilling should see the light, but be above board.

4. The kinsman seemed forward to redeem the land, till he was told, that if he did that, he must marry the widow, and then he flew off. He liked the land well enough, and probably caught at that the more greedily, because he hoped that the poor widow being under a necessity of selling, he might have so much the better bargain; *I will redeem it* (saith he) with all my heart, thinking it would be a fine addition to his estate, *ver. 4.* But Boaz told him there was a young widow in the case, and if he have the land, he must take her with it, *terra transit cum onere*, either the divine law or the usage of the country would oblige him to it, or Naomi insist upon it, that she should not sell the land, but upon this condition, *ver. 5.* Some think this doth not relate to that law of marrying the brother's widow, for that seems to oblige only the children of the same father, *Deut. xxv. 5.* unless by custom it was afterwards made to extend to the next of kin; but that this refers to the law of redemption of inheritances, *Lev. xxv. 24, 25.* for it is a Goel, a redeemer that is here enquired for, and if so, it was not by the law, but by Naomi's own resolution, that the purchaser was to marry the widow. However it was, this kinsman, when he heard the conditions of the bargain, refused it, *ver. 6.* *I cannot redeem it for myself, I will not meddle with it upon these terms, lest I mar my own inheritance; the land he thought would be an improvement of his inheritance, but not the land with the woman, that would mar it: Perhaps, he thought it would be a disparagement to him to marry such a poor widow that was come from a strange country, and almost lived upon alms: he fancied it would be a blemish to his family, it would mar his blood, and disgrace his posterity: Her eminent virtues were not sufficient in his eye to balance this.* The Chaldee paraphrase makes his reason for this refusal to be, that he had another wife, and if he should take Ruth, it might occasion strife and contention in his family, and that would mar the comfort of his inheritance. Or, he thought she might bring him a great many children, and they all would expect shares out of his estate, which would scatter it into too many hands, so that his family would make the less figure. This makes many shy of the great redemption, they are not willing to espouse religion, they have heard well of it, and having nothing to say against it, they will give it their good word, but at the same time they will give their good word with it: they are willing to part with it, and cannot be bound to it, for fear of marring their own inheritance in this world. Heaven they could be glad of, but holiness they cannot dispense with, it will not agree with the lusts they have already espoused, and therefore let who will purchase heaven at that rate, they cannot.

5. The right of redemption is fairly resigned to Boaz; if this nameless kinsman lost a good bargain, a good estate, and a good wife too, he may thank himself for not considering it better, and Boaz will thank him for making his way clear to that which he valued, and desired above any thing. In those ancient times it was not the usage to pass estates by writings, as afterwards, *Jer. xxxii. 10.* &c. but by some sign or ceremony, as with us by livery and seisin, as we commonly call it, that is, the delivery of seisin, seisin of a house by giving the key, of land by giving turf and a twig. The ceremony here used was, he that surrendered, *plucked off his shoe* (the Chaldee saith, it was *the glove of his right hand*), and gave it to him to whom he made a surrender, intimating thereby, that whatever right he had to tread, or go upon the land, he conveyed and transferred it, upon a valuable consideration, to the purchaser: This was a *testimony in Israel*, *ver. 7.* And it was done in this case, *ver. 8.* If this kinsman was obliged by the law to have married Ruth, and his refusal had been a contempt of that law, Ruth must have *plucked off his shoe*, and *spit in his face*, *Deut. xxv. 9.* But though his relation should in some measure oblige him to the duty, yet the distance of his relation might serve to excuse him from the penalty, or Ruth might very well dispense with it, since his refusal was all she desired from him. But Bishop Patrick, and the best interpreters, think this had no relation to that law, and that the drawing off the shoe was not any disgrace, as there; but a confirmation of the surrender, and an evidence that it was not fraudulently or surreptitiously obtained. Note, Fair and open dealings in all matters of contract and commerce, is what all those must make conscience of that would approve themselves Israelites indeed, without guile. How much more honourably and honestly doth Boaz come by this purchase, than if he had secretly undermined this kinsman, and privately clapped up a bargain with Naomi, unknown to him. Honesty will be found the best policy.

9. ¶ And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. 10. Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day. 11. And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders said, We are witnesses: the LORD make the woman that is come into thine house, like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem. 12. And let thy house be like the house of Pharez,

No. XL.

(whom Tamar bare unto Judah) of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman.

Boaz now sees his way clear, and therefore delays not to perform his promise made to Ruth, that he would do the kinsman's part, but in the gate of his city, before the elders and all the people, publisheth a marriage contract between himself and Ruth the Moabitess, and therewith the purchase of all the estate that belonged to the family of Elimelech. If he had not been (*chap. ii. 1.*) a man of mighty wealth, he could not have compassed this redemption, nor done this service to his kinsman's family. What is a great estate good for, but that it enables a man to do so much the more good in his generation, and especially to those of his own household, if he have but a heart to use it so.

Now concerning this marriage it appears,

1. That it was solemnized, or at least published, before many witnesses, *ver. 9, 10.* Ye are witnesses, (1.) That I have bought the estate; whoever has it, or any part of it mortgaged to them, let them come to me and they shall have their money, according to the value of the land, which was computed by the number of years to the year of jubilee, (*Lev. xxv. 15.*) when it would have returned of course to Elimelech's family. The more public the sales of estates are, the better they are guarded against frauds. (2.) That I have purchased the widow to be my wife; he had no portion with her, what jointure she had was incumbered, and he could not have it without giving as much for it as it was worth, and therefore he might well say, he purchased her, and, yet being a virtuous woman, he reckoned he had a good bargain. *House and riches are the inheritance of fathers*, but a prudent wife is more valuable, is from the Lord as a special gift. He designed in marrying her to preserve the memory of the dead, that the name of Mahlon, though he left no son to bear it up, might not be cut off from the gate of his place, but by this means might be preserved, that it should be inserted in the public register, that Boaz married Ruth the widow of Mahlon, the son of Elimelech, which posterity, whenever they had occasion to consult the register, would take particular notice of. And this history being preserved for the sake of that marriage and the issue of it, that proved an effectual means to perpetuate the name of Mahlon, even beyond the thought or intention of Boaz, to the world's end. And observe, that because Boaz did this honour to the dead, as well as this kindness to the living, God did him the honour to bring him into the genealogy of the Messiah, by which his family was dignified by all the families of Israel; while the other kinsman, that was so much afraid of diminishing himself, and marring his inheritance, by marrying the widow, has his name, family, and inheritance buried in oblivion and disgrace. A tender and generous concern for the honour of the dead, and the comfort of poor widows and strangers, neither of which can return the kindness, (*Luke xiv. 14.*) is what God will be well pleased with, and will surely recompense. Our Lord Jesus is our Goel, our Redeemer, our everlasting Redeemer; he looked, like Boaz, with compassion on the deplorable state of fallen mankind; at a vast expence he redeemed the heavenly inheritance for us, which by sin was mortgaged, and forfeited into the hands of divine justice; and which we could never have been able to redeem: He likewise purchased a peculiar people, whom he would espouse to himself, though strangers and foreigners, like Ruth, poor and despised, that the name of that dead and buried race might not be cut off for ever. He ventured the marring of his own inheritance to do this, for though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor; but he was abundantly recompensed for it by his father, who, because he thus humbled himself, hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name. Let us own our obligations to him, make sure our contract with him, and study all our days how to do him honour.

Boaz by making a public declaration of his marriage and purchase, not only secured his title against all pretenders, as it were by a fine with proclamations, but put honour upon Ruth, shewed that he was not ashamed of her and her parentage and poverty, and left a testimony against clandestine marriages. It is only that which is evil that hates the light, and comes not to it. Boaz called witnesses to what he did, for it was what he could justify, and would never disown; and such regard was then had, even to the contemned crowd, that not only the elders, but all the people that were in the gate, passing and repassing, were appealed to, *ver. 9.* and hearkened to, *ver. 11.* when they said, *we are witnesses.*

2. That it was attended with many prayers. The elders, and all the people when they witnessed it, wished well to it, and blessed it, *ver. 11, 12.* Ruth, it should seem, was now sent for, for they spake of her, *ver. 12.* as present, *this young woman*; and he having taken her to wife, they look upon her as already come into his house. And very heartily they pray for the new married couple. The senior elder, it is likely, made this prayer, and the rest of the elders, with the people, joined in it, and therefore it is spoken of, as made by them all: for in public prayers, though but one speaks, we must all pray. Observe, (1.) Marriages ought to be blessed, and accompanied with prayer, because every creature, and every condition is that to us, and no more, that God makes it to be. It is civilly and friendly, to wish all happiness to those who enter into that condition, and what good we desire, we should pray for, from the foundation of all good. The minister who gives himself to the word and prayer, as he is the fittest person to exhort, so he is the fittest to bless and pray for those that enter into this relation. (2.) We ought to desire and pray for the welfare and prosperity of one another, so far from envying or grieving at it. Now here,

1. They pray for Ruth. *The Lord make the woman that is come into thy house, like Rachel and Leah*, i. e. God make her a good wife, and a fruitful mother. Ruth was a virtuous woman, and yet needed the prayers of her friends, that by the grace of God she might be made a blessing to the family she was come into. They pray she might be like Rachel and Leah, rather than like Sarah and Rebekah, for Sarah had but one son, and Rebekah but one that was in covenant, the other was Esau, who was rejected, but Rachel and Leah did build up the house of Israel, all their children were in the church, and their offspring was numerous. May she be a flourishing, fruitful, faithful vine by thy house side.

2. They pray for Boaz, that he might continue to do worthily in the city, to which he was an ornament, and might there be more and more famous. They desire that the wife might be a blessing to the house, in the private affairs of that, and the husband a blessing to the town, in the public business of that; that she in her place, and he in his, might be wise, virtuous, and successful. Observe, The way to be famous, is to do worthily. Great reputation must be got by great merits. It is not enough not to do unworthily, to be harmless and inoffensive, but we must do worthily, be useful and serviceable to our generation; they that would be truly illustrious, must in their places shine as lights.

3. They pray for the family: *let thy house be like the house of Pharez*, i. e. let it be very numerous, let it greatly increase and multiply, as the house of Pharez did. The Bethlehemites were of the house of Pharez, and knew very well how numerous it was: in the distribution of the tribes, that grandson of Jacob had the honour which none of the rest had but Manasseh

and Ephraim, that his posterity was subdivided into two distinct families, Hezron and Hamul, *Numb.* xxvi. 21. Now they pray that the family of Boaz, which was one branch of that stock, might in process of time become as numerous and great as the whole stock now was.

13. ¶ So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son. 14. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. 15. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of *thy* life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter-in-law which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him. 16. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. 17. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David. 18. ¶ Now these *are* the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron, 19. And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, 20. And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon, 21. And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, 22. And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.

Here is, 1. Ruth a wife: Boaz took her, with the usual solemnities, to his house, and *she became his wife*, ver. 13. All the city, no doubt, congratulating the preferment of a virtuous woman, purely for her virtues. We have reason to think that Orpah, who returned from Naomi to her people, and her gods, was never half so well preferred as Ruth was. He that forsakes all for Christ, shall find more than all with him; it shall be recompensed an hundred-fold in this present time. Now Orpah wished she had gone with Naomi too; but she, like the other kinsman, stood in her own light. Boaz had prayed that this pious profelyte might receive a full reward of her courage and constancy from the God of Israel, *under whose wings she was come to trust*, and now he became an instrument of that kindness, which was an answer to his prayer, and helped to make his own words good. Now she had the command of those servants with whom she had associated, and of those fields in which she had gleaned. Thus sometimes

God raiseth up the poor out of the dust, to set them with princes, *Psal.* cxiii. 7, 8.

2. Ruth a mother. *The Lord gave her conception, for the fruit of the womb is his reward*, *Psal.* cxxvii. 3. It is one of the keys he hath in his hand; and he sometimes makes the barren woman that had been long so, to be a joyful mother of children, *Psal.* cxiii. 9. *Ira.* liv. 1.

3. Ruth still a daughter-in-law, and the same that she always was to Naomi, who was so far from being forgotten, that she was a principal sharer in these new joys. The good women that were at the labour when this child was born, congratulated Naomi upon it, more than either, Boaz or Ruth, because she was the match-maker; and it was the family of her husband that was hereby built up. See here, as before, what an air of devotion there was then, even upon the common expressions of civility among the Israelites. Prayer to God attended the marriage, ver. 11. and praise to him on the birth of the child. What pity it is that such pious language should either be disused among Christians, or degenerate into formality. *Blessed be the Lord* that has sent thee this grandson, ver. 14, 15. (1.) Who was the preserver of the name of her family, and who, they hoped, would be famous, because his father was so. (2.) Who would be hereafter dutiful and kind to her, so they hoped, because his mother was so. If he would but take after her, he would be a comfort to his old grand mother, a restorer of her life, and, if there should be occasion, would have wherewithal to be the nourisher of her old age. It is a great comfort to those that are going into years, to see those that descend from them, growing up, that are likely, by the blessing of God, to be a stay and support to them, when the years come wherein they will need such, and of which they will say, they have no pleasure in them. Observe, they say of Ruth, that she loved Naomi, and therefore was better to her than seven sons. See how God in his providence sometimes makes up the want and loss of those relations from whom we expected most comfort, in those from whom we expected least. The bonds of love prove stronger than those of nature; as there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother, so here there was a daughter-in-law better than an own child. See what wisdom and grace will do.

Now here, (1.) The child is named by the neighbours, ver. 17. The good women would have it called, Obed, *a servant*, either in remembrance of the meanness and poverty of the mother, or in prospect of his being hereafter a servant, and very serviceable to his grandmother. It is no dishonour to those that are ever so well born, to be servants to God, their friends, and their generation. The motto of the prince of Wales, is *Ich dien*, I serve. (2.) The child is nursed by the grandmother, i. e. dry-nursed, when the mother had weaned him from the breast, ver. 16. She laid it in her bosom, in token of her tender affection to it and care of it. Grandmothers are often most fond.

4. Ruth hereby brought in among the ancestors of David and Christ, which was the greatest honour. The genealogy is here drawn from Pharez, through Boaz and Obed, to David, and so leads towards the Messiah, and therefore not an endless genealogy.

A N
E X P O S I T I O N,
W I T H
P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,
U p o n t h e F I R S T B O O K o f
S A M U E L.

This book, and that which follows it, bears the name of *Samuel* in the title, not because he was the penman of them, except of so much of them as fell within his own time, to the twenty-fifth chapter of the first book, in which we have an account of his death; but because the first book begins with a large account of him, his birth and childhood, his life and government; and the rest of these two volumes that are denominated from him contains the history of the reigns of *Saul* and *David*, who were both anointed by him. And because the history of these two kings takes up the greatest part of these books, the vulgar Latin calls them the *first* and *second book of the Kings*; and the two that follow, the *third* and *fourth*, which the titles in our English Bibles take notice of with an *alias*, otherwise called the *first Book of the Kings*. The LXX call them the first and second Book of the *Kingdoms*: It is needless to contend about it, but there is no occasion to vary from the Hebrew verity. These two books contain the history of the two last of the judges, *Eli* and *Samuel*, who were not, as the rest, men of war, but clergymen; and so much of them is an appendix to the book of *Judges*; and of the two first of the kings, *Saul* and *David*, and that part of them is an entrance upon the history of the kings. They contain a considerable part of the sacred history, are sometimes referred to in the New Testament, and often in the titles of *David's Psalms*, which, if placed in their order, would fall in, in these books. It is uncertain who is the penman of them; it is probable, *Samuel* wrote the history of his own time, and that after him some of the prophets that were with *David*, *Nathan*, as likely as any, continued it. This first book gives us a full account of *Eli's* fall and *Samuel's* rise and good government; chap. i.—viii. Of *Samuel's* resignation of the government, and *Saul's* advancement and mal-administration, chap. ix.—xv. The choice of *David*, his struggles with *Saul*, *Saul's* ruin at last, and the opening of the way for *David* to the throne, chap. xvi.—xxxi. And these things are written for our learning.

C H A P. I.

The history of Samuel here begins as early as that of Samson did, even before he was born, as afterwards the history of John Baptist and our blessed Saviour. Some of the scripture worthies drop out of the clouds as it were, and their first appearance is in their full growth and lustre. But others are accounted for from the birth, and from

the womb, and from the conception. It is true of all, what God saith of the prophet Jeremiah, Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee, Jer. i. 5. But some great men were brought into the world with more observation than others, and were more early distinguished from common persons, as Samuel for one. God in this matter acts as a free agent. The story of Samson introduceth him as a child of promise, Judg. xiii. But the story of Samuel introduceth him as a child of prayer. Samson's birth was foretold by an angel
to

to his mother; Samuel was asked of God by his mother; both together intimate what wonders are produced by the word and prayer. Samuel's mother was Hannah, the principal person concerned in the story of this chapter. (1.) Here is her affliction, she was childless, and this affliction aggravated by her rival's insolence, but in some measure balanced by her husband's kindness, ver. 1—8. (2.) The prayer and vow she made to God under this affliction, in which Eli the high-priest at first censured her, but afterwards encouraged her, ver. 9—18. (3.) The birth and nursing of Samuel, ver. 19—23. (4.) The presenting of him to the Lord, ver. 24—28.

1. **N**OW there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite: 2. And he had two wives, the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. 3. And this man went up out of the city yearly, to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were there. 4. ¶ And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions. 5. But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion: for he loved Hannah; but the LORD had shut up her womb. 6. And her adversary also provoked her fore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb. 7. And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat. 8. Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?

We have here an account of the state of the family into which Samuel the prophet was born. His father's name was Elkanah, a Levite, and of the family of the Kohathites, (the most honourable house of that tribe) as appears, 1 Chron. vi. 33, 34. His ancestor Zuph was an Ephrathite, i. e. of Bethlehem-Judah, which was called Ephrathah, Ruth i. 2. there this family of the Levites was first seated, but one branch of it in process of time removed to mount Ephraim, from which Elkanah descended: Micah's Levite came from Bethlehem to mount Ephraim, Judg. xvii. 7. Ministers' families are as moveable as any. Perhaps notice is taken of their being originally Ephrathites, to shew their alliance to David: This Elkanah lived at Ramah, or Ramathaim, which signifies the double Ramah, the higher and lower town, the same with Arimathea of which Joseph was, here called Ramathaim-zophim: Zophim signifies watchmen, probably, they had one of the schools of the prophets there, for prophets are called watchmen: the Chaldee paraphrase calls Elkanah a disciple of the prophets. But it seems to me, that it was in Samuel that prophecy revived, before his time there being for a great while no open vision, 1 Sam. iii. 1. Nor is there any mention of a prophet of the Lord from Moses to Samuel, except Judg. vi. 8. So that we have no reason to think, that there was any nursery or college of prophets here, till Samuel himself founded one, 1 Sam. xix. 19, 20. This is the account of Samuel's parentage, and the place of his nativity.

Let us now take notice of the state of the family.

1. It was a devout family. All the families of Israel should be so, but Levites' families in a particular manner. Ministers should be patterns of family-religion. Elkanah went up at the solemn feasts to the tabernacle at Shiloh, to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts. I think this is the first time in scripture that God is called the Lord of hosts, Jehovah Sabaoth, a name by which he was afterwards very much called and known. Probably, Samuel the prophet was the first that used this title of God, for the comfort of Israel, when in his time their hosts were few and feeble, and those of their enemies many and mighty; then it would be a support to them, to think that the God they served is Lord of hosts, of all the hosts both of heaven and earth: of them he had a sovereign command, and makes what use he pleaseth of them. Elkanah was a country Levite, and, for aught appears, had not any place or office which required his attendance at the tabernacle, but he went up, as a common Israelite, with his own sacrifices, to encourage his neighbours, and set them a good example. When he sacrificed, he worshipped, joining prayers and thanksgivings with his sacrifices. In this course of religion he was constant, for he went up yearly.

And that which made it the more commendable in him, was, (1.) That there was a general decay and neglect of religion in the nation; some among them worshipped other gods, and the most were remiss in the service of the God of Israel, and yet Elkanah kept his integrity whatever others did, his resolution was, that he and his house should serve the Lord. (2.) That Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, were the men that were now chiefly employed in the service of the house of God; and they were men that carried themselves very ill in their place, as we shall find afterwards, yet Elkanah went up to sacrifice. God had then tied his people to one place and one altar, and forbidden them under any pretence whatsoever, to worship elsewhere, and therefore in pure obedience to that command he attended at Shiloh; if the priests did not do their duty, he would do his. Thanks be to God, we under the gospel are not tied to any one place or family; but the pastors and teachers which the exalted Redeemer has given his church, are those only whose ministration tends to the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ, Eph. iv. 11, 12. None have dominion over our faith; but our obligation is to those that are the helpers of our holiness and joy, not to any that by their scandalous immoralities, like Hophni and Phinehas, make the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred; though still the validity and efficacy of the sacraments depend not on the purity of him that administers them.

2. Yet it was a divided family, that the divisions of it carried with them both guilt and grief. Where there is piety, it is pity but there should be unity. The joint devotions of a family should put an end to divisions in it.

1. The original cause of this division was Elkanah's marrying two wives, which was a transgression of the original institution of marriage, to which our Saviour reduceth it, Mat. xix. 5. From the beginning it was

not so. It made mischief in Abraham's family and Jacob's, and here in Elkanah's: how much better doth the law of God provide for our comfort and ease in this world than we would; if we were left to ourselves? It is probable, Elkanah married Hannah first, and because he had not children by her to whom as he hoped, he married Peninnah, who bore him children indeed, but was in other things a vexation to him. Thus are men often beaten with rods of their own making.

2. That which followed upon this error was, that the two wives could not agree. They had different blessings; Peninnah like Leah was fruitful and had many children, which should have made her easy and thankful, though she was but a second wife, and was less beloved; Hannah like Rachel was childless indeed, but she was very dear to her husband, and he took all occasions to let both her and others know that she was so, and many a worthy portion he gave her, ver. 5. and this should have made her easy and thankful. But they were of different tempers; Peninnah could not bear the blessing of fruitfulness, but she grew haughty and insolent; Hannah could not bear the affliction of barrenness, but she grew melancholy and discontented: and Elkanah had a hard game to play between them.

1. Elkanah kept up his attendance at God's altar, notwithstanding this unhappy difference in his family, and took his wives and children with him, that if they could not agree in other things, they might agree to worship God together. If the devotions of a family prevail not to put an end to its divisions, yet let not the divisions put a stop to the devotions.

2. He did all he could to encourage Hannah, and to keep up her spirits under her affliction, ver. 4, 5. At the feasts he offered peace-offerings, to supplicate for peace in his family, and when he and his family were to eat their share of the sacrifice, in token of their communion with God and his altar, though he carved to Peninnah and her children competent portions, yet to Hannah he gave a worthy portion, the choicest piece that came to the table, the piece (whatever it was) that used to be given on such occasions to those that were most valued; this he did in token of his love to her, and to give all possible assurance of it. Observe, 1. Elkanah loved his wife never the less for her being barren. Christ loves his church, notwithstanding her infirmities, her barrenness, and so ought men to love their wives, Eph. v. 25. To abate our just love to any relation for the sake of any infirmity which they cannot help, and which is not their sin but their affliction, is to make God's providence quarrel with his precept, and very unkindly to add affliction to the afflicted. (2.) He studied to shew his love so much the more, because she was afflicted, insulted, and her spirits were low. It is wisdom and duty to support the weakest, and to hold up those that are run down. (3.) He shewed his great love to her, by the share he gave her of his peace-offerings. Thus we should testify our affections to our friends and relations, by abounding in prayer for them. The better we love them, the more room let us give them in our prayers.

3. Peninnah was extremely peevish and provoking. (1.) She upbraided Hannah with her affliction, despised her because she was barren, and gave her taunting language as one whom heaven did not favour. (2.) She envied the interest she had in the love of Elkanah, and the more kind he was to her the more was she exasperated against her; which was all over base and barbarous. (3.) She did this most when they went up to the house of the Lord, perhaps, because then they were more together than at other times, or because then Elkanah shewed his affection most to Hannah. But it was very ill at such a time to shew her malice, when pure hands were to be lifted up at God's altar without wrath and quarrelling. It was likewise very unkind at that time to vex Hannah, not only because then they were in company, and others would take notice of it, but then Hannah was to mind her devotions, and desired to be the most calm and composed and free from disturbance. The great adversary to our purity and peace is then most industrious to ruffle us, when we should be most composed. When the sons of God come to present themselves before the Lord, Satan will be sure to come among them, Job i. 6. (4.) She continued to do this from year to year, not once or twice, but it was her constant practice; neither deference to her husband, nor compassion to Hannah, could break her of it; and lastly, that which she designed was to make her fret; perhaps in hopes to break her heart, that she might possess her husband's heart solely; or because she took a pleasure in her uneasiness: nor could Hannah gratify her more than by fretting. Note, It is an evidence of a base and ill disposition, to delight in grieving those that are melancholy and of a sorrowful spirit, and in putting those out of humour that are apt to fret and be uneasy. We ought to bear one another's burdens, not add to them.

4. Hannah (poor woman) could not bear the provocation, she wept and did not eat, ver. 7. It made her uneasy to herself and all her relations. She did not eat of the feast, her trouble took away her appetite, made her unfit for any company, and a jar in the harmony of family joy. It was of the first upon the sacrifice that she did not eat, for they were not to eat of the holy things in their mourning, Deut. xxvi. 14. Lev. x. 19. Yet it was her infirmity to far to give way to the sorrow of the world; as to disquit herself for holy joy in God. Those that are of a fretful spirit, and are apt to lay provocations too much to heart, are enemies to themselves, and strip themselves very much of the comforts both of life and godliness. We find that God took notice of this ill effect of discontents and disagreements in the conjugal relation, that the parties aggrieved covered the altar of the Lord with tears, inasmuch that he regarded not the offering, Mal. ii. 13.

5. Elkanah said what he could to her to comfort her. She did not upbraid him with his unkindness in marrying another wife, as Sarah did, nor did she render to Peninnah railing for railing, but took the trouble wholly herself, which made her fit to be much pitied. Elkanah shewed himself extremely grieved at her grief, ver. 8. Hannah, why weepest thou? 1. He is much concerned to see her thus overwhelmed with sorrow. They that by marriage are made one flesh, ought thus far to be of one spirit too, to share in each other's troubles, so that one cannot be easy while the other is uneasy. 2. He gives her a loving reproof for it. Why weepest thou? And why is thy heart grieved? As many as God loves he rebukes, and so should we. He put her upon enquiring into the cause of her grief, though she had just reason to be troubled, yet let her consider whether she had reason to be troubled to such a degree; especially so much as to be taken off by it from eating of the holy things. Note, Our sorrow upon any account is then sinful and inordinate, when it diverts us from our duty to God, and embitters our comfort in him. When it makes us unthankful for the mercies we enjoy, distrustful of the goodness of God to us in further mercies, when it casts a damp upon our joy in Christ, and hinders us from doing the duty, and taking the comfort of our particular relations. He intimates that nothing shall be wanting on his part to balance her grief. Am not I better to thee than ten sons? Thou knowest thou hast my affection entire, and let that comfort thee. Note, We ought to take notice of our comforts to keep us from over-grieving for our crosses, for our crosses we deserve, but our comforts we have forfeited. If we would keep the balance even, we must look at that which is for us, as well as that which is against us, else we are unjust to Providence and unkind to ourselves. God hath set the one over-against the other, (Ecc. vii. 1-7.) and so should we.